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THE LIFE OF CHARLES LAMB

Charles Lamb (aged 59) and Mary Lamb (aged 69)
From a painting by F. S. Cary.

THE LIFE OF CHARLES LAMB

BY

E. V. LUCAS

VOLUME II

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

METHUEN & CO., LTD.
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First Published (*in 2 vols. demy 8vo*) . . *September 1905*
Second Edition . . . . . *October 1905*
Third Edition . . . . . *January 1906*
Fourth Edition (*in one volume*) . . . *February 1907*
Fifth Edition Revised (*in 2 vols. fcap. 8vo*) . *1921*

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FRONTISPIECE

CHARLES AND MARY LAMB.

From the Painting by F. S. Cary in 1834, now in the National Portrait Gallery.

THE LIFE OF CHARLES LAMB

CHAPTER XXXII

1818

Coleridge's Lectures—The Plague of Friends—Washington Allston—Lamb's *Works*—His sonnet against Gifford—Visit to Birmingham—Mary Lamb Ill Again—Philarète Chasles' Description of Lamb—Procter's Description.

WE come now to 1818, a year chiefly remarkable for the issue of Lamb's *Works*, in two volumes, in the summer. It is otherwise of small interest, and there are but five or six letters which can confidently be said to belong to it.

In Crabb Robinson's first entry, on Sunday, January 4th, he records meeting the Wordsworths, Haydon, the Lambs, and others, at Monkhouse's. On January 27th Coleridge's course of lectures on Shakespeare and Poetical Literature, concerning which Lamb had written to Collier, began at a hall in Flower de Luce Court, off Fetter Lane. There were to be fourteen in all; and for a while, at any rate, if not throughout, Coleridge kept his engagements. On February 12th Robinson writes: "I called late on Lamb, who does not attend Coleridge's lectures. C. has not sent him a ticket, which I cannot account for."

On February 18th Lamb writes a long letter to Mrs. Wordsworth, containing an account of the plague of

visitors, which he afterwards dressed up for his Popular Fallacy on "Home." He has not, he says, heard either Coleridge or Hazlitt (who was lecturing on Poetry at the Surrey Institution). "I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the Lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen,' said I, and there I stoppt—the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying." It is melancholy that all other record of this dinner has vanished. It may have been a banquet of consolation after "Mr. H."

In the same letter occurs the famous plea for isolation, a lament which, taken in connection with a statement at the end that the India House authorities have just abridged the old custom of leaving at one on Saturdays, may explain much of Lamb's literary unproductiveness at this time. "The reason why I cannot write letters at home is, that I am never alone. Plato's (I write to *W. W.* now) Plato's double animal parted never longed [? more] to be reciprocally reunited in the system of its first creation, than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office but some officious friend offers his damn'd unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. I could sit and gravely cast up sums in great Books, or compare sum with sum, and write PAID against this and UNP'D against t'other, and yet reserve in some 'corner of my mind' some darling thoughts all my own—faint memory of some passage in a Book—or the tone of an absent

friend's Voice—a snatch of Miss Burrell's singing—a gleam of Fanny Kelly's divine plain face. The two operations might be going on at the same time without thwarting, as the sun's two motions (earth's I mean), or as I sometimes turn round till I am giddy, in my back parlour, while my sister is walking longitudinally in the front—or as the shoulder of veal twists round with the spit, while the smoke wreathes up the chimney —but there are a set of amateurs of the Belle[s] Lettres —the gay science—who come to me as a sort of rendezvous, putting questions of criticism, of British Institutions, Lalla Rook[h]s &c. what Coleridge said at the Lecture last night—who have the form of reading men, but, for any possible use Reading can be to them but to talk of, might as well have been Ante-Cadmeans born, or have lain sucking out the sense of an Egypt". hieroglyph as long as the Pyramids will last before they should find it. These pests worrit me at business and in all its intervals, perplexing my accounts, poisoning my little salutary warming-time at the fire, puzzling my paragraphs if I take a newspaper, cramming in between my own free thoughts and a column of figures which had come to an amicable compromise but for them.

"Their noise ended, one of them, as I said, accompanys me home lest I should be solitary for a moment; he at length takes his welcome leave at the door, up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication, knock at the door, in comes Mrs. Hazlitt, or M. Burney, or Morgan, or Demogorgon, or my brother, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone, a Process absolutely necessary to my poor wretched digestion. O the pleasure of eating alone!—eating my dinner alone! let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange—for my meat turns into stone when any one dines with me, if I have not wine—wine can

mollify stones. Then *that* wine turns into acidity, acerbity, misanthropy, a hatred of my interrupters (God bless 'em! I love some of 'em dearly), and with the hatred a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choaking and death-doing, but worse is the deader dry sand they leave me on if they go before bed time. Come never, I would say to these spoilers of my dinner, but if you come, never go. The fact is, this interruption does not happen very often, but every time it comes by surprise that present bane of my life, orange wine, with all its dreary stifling consequences, follows. Evening Company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth) and voices all the golden morning, and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should covet to be in company, but I assure you that is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one, to myself. I am never C. L. but always C. L. and Co.

"He, who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself. I forget bed time, but even there these sociable frogs clamber up to annoy me. Once a week, generally some singular evening that, being alone, I go to bed at the hour I ought always to be abed, just close to my bedroom window is the club room of a public house, where a set of singers, I take them to be chorus-singers of the two theatres (it must be *both of them*), begin their orgies. They are a set of fellows (as I conceive) who being limited by their talents to the burthen of the song at the play houses, in revenge have got the common popular airs by Bishop or some cheap composer arranged for choruses, that is, to be sung all in chorus. At least I never can catch any of the text of the plain song, nothing but the Babylonish choral howl at the tail on't. 'That fury being quench'd'—the howl I mean—a curseder burden succeeds, of shouts and clapping and knocking of the table. At

length over-tasked nature drops under it and escapes for a few hours into the society of the sweet silent creatures of Dreams, which go away with mocks and mows at cockcrow. And then I think of the words Christabel's father used (bless me, I have dipt in the wrong ink) to say every morning by way of variety when he awoke—'Every knell, the Baron saith, Wakes us up to a world of death,' or something like it.[1]

"All I mean by this senseless interrupted tale is, that by my central situation I am a little over companied. Not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the Harpy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a chearful glass, but I mean merely to give you an idea between office confinement and after office society, how little time I can call my own. I mean only to draw a picture, not to make an inference. I would not that I know of have it otherwise. I only wish sometimes I could exchange some of my faces and voices for the faces and voices which a late visitation brought most welcome and carried away leaving regret, but more pleasure, even a kind of gratitude, at being so often favored with that kind northern visitation."

Crabb Robinson has this entry for April 18th: "I returned to Lamb's again. There was a large party,—the greater part of those who are usually there, but also Leigh Hunt and his wife. . . . He, tho' a man I very much dislike, did not displease me this evening. He has improved in manliness and healthfulness since I saw him last, some years ago. There was a glee about him which evinced high spirits, if not perfect health, and I envied his vivacity. He imitated Hazlitt capitally, Wordsworth not so well. Talfourd was there and injudiciously loquacious, quoting verses without mercy.

[1] Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.

He threw away Wordsworth's fine lines on 'Scorners.' Hunt, who did not sympathize with Talfourd, opposed him playfully, and that I liked him for."

On April 28th Robinson met the Lambs at Godwin's, and on the 30th he took Lamb to Monkhouse's, where were Haydon and Washington Allston, the American painter, whom Coleridge had met in Rome, and whose portrait of Coleridge at Bristol in 1814 is in the National Portrait Gallery. In the *Life and Letters of Washington Allston*, 1893, an interesting book, are some stories of Lamb, of which this perhaps is the best: "Lamb was present when a naval officer was giving an account of an action which he had been in, and to illustrate the carelessness and disregard of life at such times, said that a sailor had both his legs shot off, and as his shipmates were carrying him below, another shot came and took off both his arms; they, thinking he was pretty much used up, though life was still in him, threw him out of a port. 'Shame, d——d shame,' stuttered out Lamb, 'he m-m-might have l-lived to have been an a-a-ornament to Society!'"

In May Lamb was busy with the proofs of his *Works*, which were ready by the middle of June, as a letter to Charles and James Ollier, the publishers, tells us:—

"I am going off to Birmingh^{m}. I find my books, whatever faculty of selling they may have (I wish they had more for ($^{your}_{my}$) sake), are admirably adapted for giving away. You have been bounteous. Six more and I shall have satisfied all just claims. Am I taking too great a liberty in begging you to send 4 as follows, and reserve 2 for me when I come home? That will make 31. Thirty-one times 12 is 372 shillings, Eighteen pounds twelve Shillings!!!—but here are my friends, to whom, if you *could* transmit them, as I shall be away a month, you will greatly

"oblige the obliged

"C. Lamb.

" Mr. Ayrton, James Street, Buckingham Gate
" Mr. Alsager, Suffolk Street East, Southwark, by Horsemonger Lane
" and in one parcel
directed to R. Southey, Esq., Keswick, Cumberland
" One for R. S. ;
" and one for W^m. Wordsworth, Esq^r.

" If you will be kind enough simply to write ' from the Author ' in all 4—you will still further etc.— . . .

" I think Southey will give us a lift in that damn'd Quarterly. I meditate an attack upon that Cobler Gifford, which shall appear immediately after any favourable mention which S. may make in the Quarterly. It can't in decent *gratitude* appear *before*."

The attack on Gifford was probably the following sonnet, printed in the *Examiner* in 1819 :—

ST. CRISPIN TO MR. GIFFORD

All unadvised, and in an evil hour,
Lured by aspiring thoughts, my son, you daft
The lowly labours of the Gentle Craft
For learned toils, which blood and spirits sour.
All things, dear pledge, are not in all men's power ;
The wiser sort of shrub affects the ground ;
And sweet content of mind is oftener found
In cobbler's parlour, than in critic's bower.
The sorest work is what doth cross the grain ;
And better to this hour had you been plying
The obsequious awl with well-waxed finger flying,
Than ceaseless thus to till a thankless vein ;
Still teazing Muses, which are still denying ;
Making a stretching-leather of your brain.

Leigh Hunt seems to have been one of the influences that brought about the publication of Lamb's *Works* ; at least so I gather from this sentence in a letter from Hunt to Shelley on April 24th, 1818 : " We go to plays, to operas, and even to concerts, not forgetting a sort of conversazione at Lamb's, with whom, and

Alsager, I have renewed the intercourse, with infinite delight, which sickness interrupted. One of the best consequences of this is that Lamb's writings are being collected for publication by Ollier, and are now, indeed, going through the press."

The *Works* were well received, and two, at least, of Lamb's friends treated the book as a publication of the first importance: Talfourd, in the *Champion*, and Leigh Hunt, in the *Examiner*. The two volumes contained, in addition to "John Woodvil," "Rosamund Gray" and the poems, the best of the essays from the *Reflector*, the best criticisms from the "Dramatic Specimens," and "Mr. H." Lamb was forty-three this year, and for some time past had steadily been growing less and less productive. I have no doubt he really believed that these volumes did contain his final representative *Works*, for although we know him to have looked forward to leisure and ease, there is no reason to suppose that he expected any renaissance of literary power or activity; and yet to-day it is not by anything in his *Works* that he is popularly known at all—if we except the poems "Hester" and "The Old Familiar Faces"—but by writings that were not thought of until two years later.

Of Lamb's visit to Birmingham we know nothing; but since he was to be gone a month it is reasonable to suppose that his sister was with him. That Mary Lamb was ill in August we know from a letter from Mrs. Leigh Hunt to Mary Shelley on August 4th, 1818: "You will be sorry to hear poor Miss Lamb is ill again: what a sad thing it is for such an admirable woman. I don't know how it is, but those things seem to fall on the most delightful and amiable of mankind—I don't mean her particular complaint, but distress and uneasiness in general."

The remainder of 1818 is almost a blank; but possibly to this year belongs the long and diverting letter to John Chambers, a fellow clerk in the East India

House, with the famous passage concerning Tommy Bye: "Bye is about publishing a volume of poems which he means to dedicate to Matthie. Methinks he might have found a better Mæcenas. They are chiefly amatory, others of them stupid, the greater part very far below mediocrity; but they discover much tender feeling; they are most like Petrarch of any foreign Poet, or what we might have supposed Petrarch would have written if Petrarch had been born a fool!" I have sought in vain for this delectable volume. Perhaps it was not actually published after all.

The last letter of the year is to Coleridge, thanking him for a ticket for one of his two new courses of lectures—one on the "History of Philosophy," and one on "Six Plays of Shakespeare"—and promising to spend Sunday, January 3rd, 1819, with him.

The French critic, Philarète Chasles, has given us a picture of Lamb in 1818—in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in 1842, under the title "Le Dernier Humoriste Anglais." "I was at James Valpy's one evening in June, 1818, in his office where the candle must be lit at mid-day, and the fire in June, when a little, dark, old fellow came in; one could only distinguish a head, then big shoulders, then a delicate body, and finally two artistically slender legs, which were almost imperceptible. Under his arm was a green umbrella, and over his eyes a very old hat. Wit, sweetness, melancholy and gaiety gushed in torrents from this extraordinary physiognomy. After first seeing him, you did not think any more of his ridiculous body; it seemed as if something purely intellectual was before you, soaring above matter, burning through the material form, like light, and overflowing everywhere. There was neither health, nor strength and scarcely sufficient anatomical reality on those poor little spindles, clothed in stockings of Chinese silk, ending in impossible feet, encased in large shoes, which placed flatly on the ground advanced slowly in the manner of a web-footed creature. But one did

not notice these singularities, one saw only the magnificently developed forehead, on which his lustrous black hair curled naturally, the great, sad eyes, the expression of the large brownish, clear pupil, the excessively fine nostrils, cut more delicately than has ever been seen in others, the curves of the nose very like those of Jean Jacques in his portraits. All this, the oval of the face, nobly long, the exquisite contour of the mouth, and the beautiful pose of the head, lent dignity, and that of the highest kind—intellectual dignity—to this weakly and disproportioned organisation.

"The good Lamb—whom no one will ever translate, and rightly, a kind of La Bruyère, Addison and Sterne; Charles Lamb, *Carlagnulus*, as the learned called him; *Elia*, as did people of fashion (he had thirty different names of endearment given to him by different classes and I never heard him spoken of seriously and solemnly as Mr. Lamb)—the good Lamb came to obtain news of one of his friends, Hugo Boyce, a poor and consumptive young fellow."

Chasles, afterwards Conservateur of the Bibliothèque Mazarin, who did much in his time to introduce English writers to French readers, is not mentioned anywhere in the letters, at least by name. The term *Carlagnulus* was Lamb's own, and otherwise I think was never used by the learned. It is interesting to have Le Grice's testimony as to Lamb's plantigrade gait fortified by the Frenchman. Of Hugo Boyce I know nothing. Valpy was the publisher of the classics for whom George Dyer did such a prodigious amount of work.

Procter has thus described Lamb, in his Memoir, as he appeared about this time: "Persons who had been in the habit of traversing Covent Garden . . . might by extending their walk a few yards into Russell Street have noted a small spare man, clothed in black, who went out every morning and returned every afternoon,

as regularly as the hands of the clock moved towards certain hours. You could not mistake him. He was somewhat stiff in his manner, and almost clerical in dress; which indicated much wear. He had a long, melancholy face, with keen penetrating eyes; and he walked with a short, resolute step, City-wards. He looked no one in the face for more than a moment, yet contrived to see everything as he went on. No one who ever studied the human features could pass by without recollecting his countenance; it was full of sensibility, and it came upon you like a new thought, which you could not help dwelling upon afterwards; it gave rise to meditation and did you good. This small half-clerical man was—Charles Lamb."

The following discerning lines, signed M. E. W., which were printed in *Temple Bar* for July, 1886, come felicitously here, and I take the liberty of quoting them with thanks to their unknown author:—

CHARLES LAMB

A small spare man, close gaitered to the knee
In suit of rusty black whose folds betray
The last loved dusty folio, bought to-day
And carried proudly to the sanctuary
Of home (and Mary's) keeping. Quaintly wise
In saws and knowledge of a bygone age,
Each old-world fancy on a yellowed page,
Tracked by the "smoky-brightness" of his eyes,
Shone new-illumined; or in daring flight
That outvied Ariel, his spirit caught
The reflex of a rainbowed cloud, and taught
The glories of a Dreamland of delight!
A haunter of the bookstalls! Even now
We listen for the eager stammering speech
That clenched a happy bargain,—think to reach
And clasp those nervous fingers—watch the brow
Grow lined with trouble at another's pain
His large-souled sympathies had made his own,
Or linger till the bitterness had flown
And low-toned laughter proved him bright again.
This man's identity, so sweet, so clear,

Could never die with death. We do not say
"I should have loved him had the self-same day
But found us living," but "I hold him dear
Now, at this moment"; and if patient ears,
Wrapped in God's silence, dimly now and then
Catch echoes of the grateful love of men,
Charles Lamb rests happily thro' all these years.

CHAPTER XXXIII

1819

Crabb Robinson's *Diary*—Charles Lloyd in London—Tommy Bye's Excesses—Lamb's Admiration of Miss Kelly—His Proposal and Her Answer—"The Waggoner"—Lamb at Cambridge—William Wordsworth, junior, at 18 Great Russell Street—Morgan in Distress.

IN 1819 Lamb's pen resumed some of the activity of 1810 and 1811, although the articles which we can attribute to it are few enough; but the shining event of the year was a very brief but profoundly interesting correspondence with Miss Kelly. To this we come later.

Crabb Robinson's first entry, dated February 2nd, states that Charles and Mary Lamb came that day to look at his prints; he has nothing more of importance for some months. April 26th is the date of Lamb's letter to Wordsworth in alternate red and black inks, about the mock "Peter Bell," a poor malicious thing which John Hamilton Reynolds (whom Lamb was to know later) had just put forth in anticipation of Wordsworth's poem. Speaking of the real "Peter Bell," which he had seen in manuscript some years before, Lamb says: "It is excellent. For its matter, I mean. I cannot say that the style of it quite satisfies me. It is too lyrical." The lines

> Is it a party in a parlour,
> All silent and all damned?

which Wordsworth afterwards expunged, seem to have clung to Lamb's memory, for there is the story of his shouting the words at a solemn evening gathering seen through a window in passing: "A party in a parlour,

all silent and all damned!" he cried, shaking the railings the while.

Although Lamb does not say so, I fancy that his sister must have been again ill at this time; for Robinson's next entry seems to suggest it. "May 11th, Tuesday, 1819:—I then went to C. Lamb. Mrs. Hazlitt and some old female friends of L.'s there. I gossiped there till eleven; L. ennuyé with the good kind of people who had visited him, whom he had too much kindness of heart not to entertain to the best of his capacity, but who could not entertain him in return." (Robinson's record of meeting the brother and sister at the Godwins' on July 6th enables us to estimate the length of this attack.) On June 17th he writes: "I went then to Lamb's, and found the Burneys there and also Hazlitt, besides an odd assemblage, Lloyd the poet and Miss Betham."

Charles Lloyd was at this time settled again in London, apparently quite restored to health and busy with literary plans. His recovery, Talfourd tells us, had been largely brought about by the effect upon him of the acting of Macready in "Rob Roy." "A deep gloom had gradually overcast his mind, and threatened wholly to encircle it, when he was induced to look in at Covent-Garden Theatre and witness the performance of *Rob Roy*. The picture which he then beheld of the generous outlaw,—the frank, gallant, noble bearing,—the air and movements, as of one 'free of mountain solitudes,'—the touches of manly pathos and irresistible cordiality,—delighted and melted him, won him from his painful introspections, and brought to him the unwonted relief of tears. He went home 'a *gayer* and a wiser man'; returned again to the theatre, whenever the healing enjoyments could be renewed there; and sought the acquaintance of the actor who had broken the melancholy spell in which he was enthralled, and had restored the pulses of his nature to their healthful beatings."

Later Lloyd introduced Macready to Lamb, but we have no record of their intercourse beyond Lamb's reference in "Barbara S." to his "classical conference" with that great actor; Robinson's remark on page 528; and the single entry in Macready's diary stating that Lamb once expressed the wish to draw his last breath through a pipe and expel it in a pun. Lloyd's *Nugæ Canoræ* (quoted from in Chapter XII), containing many of his early poems with Coleridge and Lamb, together with new verses, was published in this year. Lamb reviewed the volume in the *Examiner*.

On May 28th Lamb writes to Manning, who was then living alone somewhere in the country, possibly at Totteridge, in Hertfordshire, giving him a long account of the unfortunate effect of a fit of alcoholic excess on the part of Tommy Bye, the India House Petrarch. "Tommy had not brains to work off an overnight's surfeit by ten o'clock next morning; and unfortunately, in he wandered the other morning drunk with last night, and with a superfœtation of drink taken in since he set out from bed. He came staggering under his double burthen, like trees in Java, bearing at once blossom, fruit, and falling fruit, as I have heard you or some other traveller tell, with his face literally as blue as the bluest firmament; some wretched calico that he had mopped his poor oozy front with had rendered up its native dye, and the devil a bit would he consent to wash it, but swore it was characteristic, for he was going to the sale of indigo, and set up a laugh which I did not think the lungs of mortal man were competent to. It was like a thousand people laughing, or the Goblin Page. He imagined afterwards that the whole office had been laughing at him, so strange did his own sounds strike upon his *non*sensorium. But Tommy has laughed his last laugh, and awoke the next day to find himself reduced from an abused income of £600 per annum to one-sixth of the sum, after thirty-six years' tolerably good service." "Will

you drop in to-morrow night ? " Lamb adds. " Fanny Kelly is coming, if she does not cheat us."—And this brings us to one whose genius Lamb did more than any one to celebrate.

Frances Maria Kelly, or Fanny Kelly, as she was always called, was born in 1790, and was thus fifteen years younger than Lamb and a quarter of a century younger than his sister. After a very hard-worked childhood, one incident of which is beautifully preserved by Lamb in the *Elia* essay " Barbara S.," Miss Kelly emerged as a popular actress, the artistic successor of Mrs. Jordan, and soon to stand alone as a comédienne. Lamb had early singled her out for his particular admiration. In his *Works* in 1818 had been printed this sonnet :—

TO MISS KELLY

You are not, Kelly, of the common strain,
That stoop their pride and female honor down
To please that many-headed beast *the town*,
And vend their lavish smiles and tricks for gain :
By fortune thrown amid the actor's train,
You keep your native dignity of thought ;
The plaudits that attend you come unsought,
As tributes due unto your natural vein.
Your tears have passion in them, and a grace
Of genuine freshness, which our hearts avow ;
Your smiles are winds whose ways we cannot trace,
That vanish and return we know not how—
And please the better from a pensive face,
And thoughtful eye, and a reflecting brow.[1]

And in January, 1819, in a letter printed in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, which was the property of his friend and schoolfellow John Mathew Gutch, Lamb wrote the following appreciation of Miss Kelly's act-

[1] When the *Works* were published, Lamb sent Miss Kelly a copy, on July 7th, 1818, with this note, the original of which is now in the collection of Mr. A. Edward Newton of Philadelphia : " Mr. Lamb having taken the liberty of addressing a slight compliment to Miss Kelly in his first volume, respectfully requests her acceptance of the Collection."

ing, occasioned by her visit to that town: "I very much wish you [Gutch] would go and see her. You will not see Mrs. Jordan, but something else; something on the whole very little, if at all, inferior to that lady, in her best days. I cannot hope that you will think so; I do not even wish that you should. Our longest remembrances are the most sacred; and I shall revere the prejudice, that shall prevent you from thinking quite so favorably of her as I do.—I do not well know how to draw a parallel between their distinct manners of acting. I seem to recognize the same pleasantness and nature in both: but Mrs. Jordan's was the carelessness of a child; her childlike spirit shook off the load of years from her spectators; she seemed one whom care could not come near; a privileged being, sent to teach mankind what it most wants—joyousness. Hence, if we had more unmixed pleasure from her performances, we had, perhaps, less sympathy with them than with those of her successor. This latter lady's is the joy of a freed spirit, escaping from care, as a bird that had been limed; her smiles, if I may use the expression, seemed saved out of the fire, relics which a good and innocent heart had snatched up as most portable; her discontents are visitors and not inmates: she can lay them by altogether; and when she does so, I am not sure that she is not greatest."

These were public utterances. In a letter to Wordsworth in the same year Lamb went farther (as we have seen), speaking of Fanny Kelly's "divine plain face."

We knew therefore that at any rate intellectually Lamb was disposed to look upon Miss Kelly with the utmost kindness; and that at one time his heart also was offered to her, we knew vaguely, from a statement made in two or three places, but with most authority by the late Charles Kent (who had it direct from Miss Kelly) in his memoir of that lady in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. My own feeling had always been

that Lamb's proposal was verbal and belonged to the late Enfield period, at a time when he was perhaps for the moment convinced that his sister, whose illnesses grew worse, had finally been removed from him. It was therefore with surprise that I read the little correspondence between Lamb and Miss Kelly that was made public by the late John Hollingshead, which shows that the year of the proposal was as early as 1819 and that Mary Lamb—whom we have seen (on page 297) describing herself as an ideal sister-in-law—knew and approved. The correspondence consists of a letter from Lamb to Miss Kelly, which with no exaggeration may be termed the most interesting that has been printed since Talfourd's *Final Memorials*; one from Miss Kelly in reply to it; and one from Lamb closing the incident.

Lamb's first letter requires a little preface. He was at that time forty-four and in receipt of a salary of £600; Miss Kelly was twenty-nine. In the summer of 1819 Miss Kelly was engaged at the Lyceum (or the English Opera House, as it was also called), which was then leased to Samuel James Arnold, brother-in-law of Lamb's friend Ayrton; and Lamb was writing criticisms of her acting in the *Examiner*. On July 4th appeared his article on "The Jovial Crew" with Miss Kelly as Rachel. Now to read this article in ignorance of the critic's innermost feelings for the actress is to experience no more than the customary intellectual titillation that is imparted by a piece of rich appreciation from such a pen; but to read it knowing what was in his mind at the time is a totally different thing. What before was mere inspired dramatic criticism becomes a revelation charged with human interest. "But the *Princess of Mumpers*, and *Lady Paramount*, of beggarly counterfeit accents, was *she* that played *Rachel*. Her gabbling lachrymose petitions; her tones, such as we have heard by the side of old woods, when an irresistible face has come peeping on one on a sudden; with her

full black locks, and a *voice*—how shall we describe it?—a voice that was by nature meant to convey nothing but truth and goodness, but warped by circumstance into an assurance that she is telling us a lie—that catching twitch of the thievish irreproveable finger—those ballad-singers' notes, so vulgar, yet so unvulgar—that assurance, so like impudence, and yet so many countless leagues removed from it—her jeers, which we had rather stand, than be caressed with other ladies' compliments, a summer's day long—her face, with a wild out-of-door's grace upon it—— . . . 'What a lass that were,' said a stranger who sate beside us, speaking of Miss Kelly in *Rachel*, 'to go a gypseying through the world with.'" Knowing what we do of Charles Lamb's little ways, we can be in no doubt as to the identity of the stranger who was fabled to have sate beside him.

Miss Kelly would of course read the criticism, and being a woman, and a woman of genius, would probably be not wholly unaware of the significance of a portion of it; and therefore perhaps she was not altogether unprepared for Lamb's first letter, which he wrote a fortnight later.

"20 July, 1819.

"Dear Miss Kelly,—We had the pleasure, *pain* I might better call it, of seeing you last night in the new Play. It was a most consummate piece of Acting, but what a task for you to undergo! at a time when your heart is sore from real sorrow! it has given rise to a train of thinking, which I cannot suppress.

"Would to God you were released from this way of life; that you could bring your mind to consent to take your lot with us, and throw off for ever the whole burden of your Profession. I neither expect or wish you to take notice of this which I am writing, in your present over occupied & hurried state.—But to think of it at your leisure. I have quite income enough, if

that were all, to justify for me making such a proposal, with what I may call even a handsome provision for my survivor. What you possess of your own would naturally be appropriated to those, for whose sakes chiefly you have made so many hard sacrifices. I am not so foolish as not to know that I am a most unworthy match for such a one as you, but you have for years been a principal object in my mind. In many a sweet assumed character I have learned to love you, but simply as F. M. Kelly I love you better than them all. Can you quit these shadows of existence, & come & be a reality to us? can you leave off harassing yourself to please a thankless multitude, who know nothing of you, & begin at last to live to yourself & your friends?

"As plainly & frankly as I have seen you give or refuse assent in some feigned scene, so frankly do me the justice to answer me. It is impossible I should feel injured or aggrieved by your telling me at once, that the proposal does not suit you. It is impossible that I should ever think of molesting you with idle importunity and persecution after your mind [is] once firmly spoken—but happier, far happier, could I have leave to hope a time might come, when our friends might be your friends; our interests yours; our book-knowledge, if in that inconsiderable particular we have any little advantage, might impart something to you, which you would every day have it in your power ten thousand fold to repay by the added cheerfulness and joy which you could not fail to bring as a dowry into whatever family should have the honor and happiness of receiving *you*, the most welcome accession that could be made to it.

"In haste, but with entire respect & deepest affection, I subscribe myself C. Lamb."

This was not Miss Kelly's first proposal. The fate of her divine plain face was to win a certain grave,

persistent, silent love, and even to provoke hopelessness to a tragic degree, for on two occasions in her career she was fired at on the stage, the assailant in one case (and possibly in both) being a desperate admirer. On the first occasion, in 1816, some of the shot, says Mr. Kent, fell in the lap of Mary Lamb, who was present with her brother. Oxberry tells also of a devotee who for at least ten years never failed to attend a London performance in which Miss Kelly took part. He sat in the third or fourth row of the pit, but never told his love ; after a glance at her as she left the stage door he disappeared until the next night.

This was Miss Kelly's reply to Lamb's letter, returned by hand—the way, I imagine, in which his proposal had reached her :—

"Henrietta Street, July 20th, 1819.

"An early & deeply rooted attachment has fixed my heart on one from whom no worldly prospect can well induce me to withdraw it, but while I thus *frankly* & decidedly decline your proposal, believe me, I am not insensible to the high honour which the preference of such a mind as yours confers upon me—let me, however, hope that all thought upon this subject will end with this letter, & that you will henceforth encourage no other sentiment towards me than esteem in my private character and a continuance of that approbation of my humble talents which you have already expressed so much & so often to my advantage and gratification.

"Believe me I feel proud to acknowledge myself

"Your obliged friend

"F. M. Kelly."

Lamb also replied at once, and his little romance was over, a single day seeing the whole drama played.

"July 20th, 1819.

"DEAR MISS KELLY,—*Your injunctions shall be obeyed to a tittle.* I feel myself in a lackadaisacal no-how-ish kind of a humour. I believe it is the rain, or something. I had thought to have written seriously, but I fancy I succeed best in epistles of mere fun; puns & *that* nonsense. You will be good friends with us, will you not? let what has past 'break no bones' between us. You will not refuse us them next time we send for them?[1]

"Yours very truly,

"C. L.

"Do you observe the delicacy of not signing my full name? N. B. Do not paste that last letter of mine into your Book."

[1] By "bones" Lamb means also the little ivory discs which were given by the management to friends, entitling them to free admission to the theatre. It was on the subject of these permanent passes to the pit that he had written, also to Miss Kelly, and only a few days before his proposal, one of the most ingenious punning and fanciful letters of his life; which was first made public by its owner, Mr. A. Edward Newton, in his very delightful book, *The Amenities of Book Collecting* in 1918. The letter, dated July 9th, 1819, runs thus:—

> "DEAR MISS KELLY,—If your Bones are not engaged on Monday night, will you favor us with the use of them? I know, if you can oblige us you will make no bones of it; if you cannot, it shall break none betwixt us. We might ask somebody else, but we do not like the bones of any strange animal. We should be welcome to dear Mrs. Liston's, but then she is so plump there is no getting at them. I should prefer Miss Iver's—they must be ivory I take it for granted—but she is married to Mr. * * *, and become bone of his bone, consequently can have none of her own to dispose of. Well, it all comes to this,—if you can let us have them, you will, I dare say; if you cannot, God rest your bones. I am almost at the end of my bon-mots. +
>
> C. LAMB."

I doubt if there is a better letter than that in English literature ; or, in its instant acceptance of defeat, its brave, half-smiling admission that yet another dream was shattered, one more pathetic.

I have said that the drama was played to the end on July 20th ; but it had a little epilogue. In the *Examiner* for August 1st Lamb wrote of the Lyceum again. The play was "The Hypocrite," and this is how he spoke of Miss Kelly : "She is in truth not framed to tease or torment even in jest, but to utter a hearty *Yes* or *No* ; to yield or refuse assent with a noble sincerity. We have not the pleasure of being acquainted with her, but we have been told that she carries the same cordial manners into private life." That was the end ; and is it not the prettiest dramatic criticism in the world ?

Miss Kelly died unmarried at the age of ninety-two ; Charles Lamb died unmarried at the age of fifty-nine. That his wishes with regard to the old footing were realised we may feel sure, for she continued to visit her friends, both in London and at Enfield, and in later years was taught Latin by Mary Lamb and George Darley ; and this reminds me that we have a glimpse of the actress through the eyes of another and an earlier Latin pupil of Mary Lamb—Mary Victoria Novello, afterwards Mrs. Cowden Clarke, who, with young William Hazlitt, studied the rudiments of the language under Miss Lamb's guidance. Says Cowden Clarke : "On one of these occasions of the Latin lessons in Russell Street, Covent Garden, where Mr. and Miss Lamb then lived, Victoria saw a lady come in, who appeared to her strikingly intellectual-looking, and still young ; she was surprised, therefore, to hear the lady say, in the course of conversation, 'Oh, as for me, my dear Miss Lamb, I'm nothing now but a stocking-mending old woman.' When the lady's visit came to an end, and she was gone, Mary Lamb took occasion to tell Victoria who she was, and to explain her curious

speech. The lady was no other than Miss Kelly; and Mary Lamb, while describing to the young girl the eminent merits of the admirable actress, showed her how a temporary depression of spirits in an artistic nature sometimes takes refuge in a half-playful, half-bitter irony of speech."

Before leaving the subject of Charles Lamb's attachment to Miss Kelly, one little point must be mentioned. It has generally been supposed that in the essay "Dream Children," written in 1821, Lamb was imagining what might have happened had he married Alice W——. Does the very recent offer to Miss Kelly put upon that beautiful tissue of wistful regrets and delicate imaginings a new complexion?

To return to the more prosaic current of the year, early in June, 1819, was published *The Waggoner* by William Wordsworth, with the following dedication to Charles Lamb:—

"My dear Friend—

"When I sent you, a few weeks ago, 'The Tale of Peter Bell,' you asked 'Why "The Waggoner" was not added?' To say the truth, from the higher tone of imagination, and the deeper touches of passion aimed at in the former, I apprehended this little Piece could not accompany it without disadvantage. In the year 1806, if I am not mistaken, 'The Waggoner' was read to you in manuscript, and as you have remembered it for so long a time, I am the more encouraged to hope, that, since the localities on which the poem partly depends did not prevent its being interesting to you, it may prove acceptable to others. Being, therefore, in some measure the cause of its present appearance, you must allow me the gratification of inscribing it to you, in acknowledgment of the pleasure I have derived from your Writings, and of the high esteem with which I am

"Very truly yours,

"William Wordsworth."

The poem relates how Benjamin, a reformed waggoner in the Lake Country, again succumbed one stormy night to the temptations of the Cherry Tree Inn at Grasmere, and on reaching Keswick was dismissed by

his master. Writing to thank Wordsworth for the dedication Lamb says, on June 7th: "You cannot imagine how proud we are here of the dedication. We read it twice for once that we do the poem—I mean all through—yet Benjamin is no common favorite—there is a spirit of beautiful tolerance in it—it is as good as it was in 1806—and will be as good in 1829 if our dim eyes shall be awake to peruse it.

"Methinks there is a kind of shadowing affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication—but I will not enter into personal themes—else, substituting ******* **** [Charles Lamb] for Ben, and the Honble United Company of Merch^ts. trading to the East Indies for the Master of the misused Team, it might seem by no far fetched analogy to point its dim warnings hitherward—but I reject the omen—especially as its import seems to have been diverted to another victim [*i.e.*, Tommy Bye, whose story is again told, as to Manning above]. . . .

"The Waggoner is very ill put up in boards; at least it seems to me always to open at the dedication—but that is a mechanical fault."

We have no information as to the Lambs' holiday this year. They seem once again to have gone to Dalston, and may have made occasional excursions from that centre. We know, however, that Lamb was at Cambridge in August (though it may have been only for a day or so) from the circumstance that he sent to the *Examiner* the following sonnet, his best piece of verse for some years, entitled "Written at Cambridge, August 15th, 1819":—

I was not train'd in Academic bowers,
And to those learned streams I nothing owe
Which copious from those twin fair founts do flow;
Mine have been anything but studious hours.
Yet can I fancy, wandering 'mid thy towers,
Myself a nursling, Granta, of thy lap;
My brow seems tightening with the Doctor's cap,

> And I walk *gownéd*; feel unusual powers.
> Strange forms of logic clothe my admiring speech,
> Old Ramus' ghost is busy at my brain;
> And my skull teems with notions infinite.
> Be still, ye reed of Camus, while I teach
> Truths, which transcend the searching Schoolmen's vein,
> And half had stagger'd that stout Stagirite!

The same idea is expressed in the *Elia* essay "Oxford in the Vacation." "I can here," Lamb wrote, of either Cambridge or Oxford, "play the gentleman, enact the student. To such a one as myself, who has been defrauded in his young years of the sweet food of academic institution, nowhere is so pleasant, to while away a few idle weeks at, as one or other of the Universities. Their vacation, too, at this time of the year, falls in so pat with *ours*. Here I can take my walks unmolested, and fancy myself of what degree or standing I please. I seem admitted *ad eundem*. I fetch up past opportunities. I can rise at the chapel-bell, and dream that it rings for *me*. In moods of humility I can be a Sizar, or a Servitor. When the peacock vein rises, I strut a Gentleman Commoner. In graver moments, I proceed Master of Arts. Indeed I do not think I am much unlike that respectable character. I have seen your dim-eyed vergers, and bed-makers in spectacles, drop a bow or curtsy, as I pass, wisely mistaking me for something of the sort. I go about in black, which favours the notion. Only in Christ Church reverend quadrangle, I can be content to pass for nothing short of a Seraphic Doctor."

From Cambridge Lamb may have journeyed farther; at any rate I think it probable that his meeting with Elliston in the circulating library at Leamington, described in the *Elia* essay "Ellistoniana," belonged to the summer of this year, although in that paper he suggests that it was earlier. In Raymond's *Memoirs of Elliston*, which has for motto two sentences from Lamb, is a story which I have no doubt is

true, of Lamb, Elliston and Munden, driving together from Leamington to Warwick Castle, either in 1819 or 1820. Just at the entrance to Leamington, on the return journey, Munden called out: "Stay, stay, my dear boys, I'll just slip out here. Here lives my dear old friend, Mistress Winifred Watson, so I'll look in on the old lady. In her eighty-sixth year, her eighty-sixth year, Mr. Lamb." On the disappearance of Munden as fast as his gait would permit, Elliston burst into laughter, explaining to his perplexed companion that the whole story was a ruse of Munden's to escape settlement time at the livery stables. This, according to Raymond, was Lamb's first face-to-face meeting with Munden, whom he knew so well across the footlights and did so much to make immortal.

On September 26th, Crabb Robinson tells us, the Lambs were at home. His next entry of any interest is under November 5th: "I called in the forenoon on Miss Lamb. She talked about poor Tom Holcroft, who has been turned by Rickman out of his employ in a way offensive to Lamb. The boy has no situation. His brother has written from India to say he can find him employment there; but how is he to get over?" Holcroft was a son of the dramatist and had probably held a small clerkship at the House of Commons, as Martin Burney also did, under Rickman. Robinson goes on to say that Anthony Robinson and he will each give £10 to the fund. A letter from Lamb to Holcroft, written probably at this time, counsels him to retain whatever temporary work he had obtained until certain of being able to get to India to try for a post there. Lamb tells him that he has moved into country lodgings, though he is still at the India House in the morning. Crabb Robinson has another entry: "Nov. 16:—I expected to see the Lambs there [at Godwin's] but they did not come. . . . Nothing has been done yet for Tom Holcroft, but it is hoped that a passage will be procured for him to India cheap."

And again, "Nov. 18th, 1819. Thursday :—I then went to Lamb's and played a rubber with his party. . . . I returned again to the Lambs and stayed late ; chatted a little with Lloyd, a poor sickly creature he seems—in body and mind—I should judge from his tone of voice and manners, but perhaps I think so because I know the fact. The party was numerous."

The perfect letter of November 25th, from Lamb to Dorothy Wordsworth, describing young William Words worth's visit to Great Russell Street, must be printed in full. William Wordsworth, junior, who lived to succeed his father as Comptroller of Stamps, and who survived until 1883, was then nine :—

"Dear Miss Wordsworth, You will think me negligent, but I wanted to see more of Willy, before I ventured to express a prediction. Till yesterday I had barely seen him—Virgilium Tantum Vidi—but yesterday he gave us his small company to a bullock's heart—and I can pronounce him a lad of promise. He is no pedant nor bookworm, so far I can answer. Perhaps he has hitherto paid too little attention to other men's inventions, preferring, like Lord Foppington, the 'natural sprouts of his own.' But he has observation, and seems thoroughly awake. I am ill at remembering other people's bon mots, but the following are a few. Being taken over Waterloo Bridge, he remarked that if we had no mountains, we had a fine river at least,which was a Touch of the Comparative, but then he added, in a strain which augured less for his future abilities as a Pol.tical Economist, that he supposed they must take at least a pound a week Toll. Like a curious naturalist he inquired if the tide did not come up a little salty. This being satisfactorily answered, he put another question as to the flux and reflux, which being rather cunningly evaded than artfully solved by that she-Aristotle Mary, who muttered something about its getting up an hour sooner and sooner every day, he sagely replied, 'Then it must

come to the same thing at last' which was a speech worthy of an infant Halley!

"The Lion in the 'Change by no means came up to his ideal standard. So impossible it is for Nature in any of her works to come up to the standard of a child's imagination. The whelps (Lionets) he was sorry to find were dead, and on particular enquiry his old friend the Ouran Outang had gone the way of all flesh also. The grand Tiger was also sick, and expected in no short time to exchange this transitory world for another—or none. But again, there was a Golden Eagle (I do not mean that of Charing) which did much arride and console him. William's genius, I take it, leans a little to the figurative, for being at play at Tricktrack (a kind of minor Billiard-table which we keep for smaller wights, and sometimes refresh our own mature fatigues with taking a hand at), not being able to hit a ball he had iterate aimed at, he cried out, 'I cannot hit that beast.' Now the balls are usually called men, but he felicitously hit upon a middle term, a term of approximation and imaginative reconciliation, a something where the two ends, of the brute matter (ivory) and their human and rather violent personification into *men*, might meet, as I take it, illustrative of that Excellent remark in a certain Preface about Imagination, explaining 'like a sea-beast that had crawled forth to sun himself.'[1] Not that I accuse William Minor of hereditary plagiary, or conceive the image to have come ex traduce. Rather he seemeth to keep aloof from any source of imitation, and purposely to remain ignorant of what mighty poets have done in this kind before him. For being asked if his father had ever been on Westminster Bridge, he answer'd that he did not know.

[1] Lamb alludes to the preface to the edition of 1815 of Wordsworth's poems, where he quotes illustratively from his "Resolution and Independence":—

> Like a Sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf
> Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun himself.

"It is hard to discern the Oak in the Acorn, or a Temple like St. Paul's in the first stone which is laid, nor can I quite prefigure what destination the genius of William Minor hath to take. Some few hints I have set down, to guide my future observations. He hath the power of calculation in no ordinary degree for a chit. He combineth figures, after the first boggle, rapidly. As in the Tricktrack board, where the hits are figured, at first he did not perceive that 15 and 7 made 22, but by a little use he could combine 8 with 25—and 33 again with 16, which approacheth something in kind (far let me be from flattering him by saying in degree) to that of the famous American boy.[1] I am sometimes inclined to think I perceive the future satirist in him, for he hath a sub-sardonic smile which bursteth out upon occasion, as when he was asked if London were as big as Ambleside, and indeed no other answer was given, or proper to be given, to so ensnaring and provoking a question. In the contour of scull certainly I discern something paternal. But whether in all respects the future man shall transcend his father's fame, Time the trier of geniuses must decide. Be it pronounced peremptorily at present, that Willy is a well-mannered child, and though no great student, hath yet a lively eye for things that lie before him. Given in haste from my desk at Leadenhall. Your's and yours' most sincerely C. Lamb."

The following passage in a letter from Southey to Grosvenor Bedford, December 3rd, 1819, shows Lamb assuming another responsibility—a small one, it is true, but one that many richer men would reject. Coleridge's friend Morgan, with whom the Lambs had stayed at Calne in 1817, had met with misfortune. "I must trespass on you farther, and request that you will seal up ten pounds, and leave it with Rickman.

[1] This was Zerah Colburn, the mathematical prodigy, born in Vermont State in 1804 and exhibited in America and Europe by his father.

directed for Charles Lamb, Esq., from R. S. It is for poor John Morgan, whom you may remember some twenty years ago. . . . A stroke of the palsy has utterly disabled him from doing anything to maintain himself; his wife has accepted a situation as mistress of a charity-school, with a miserable salary of £40 a-year; and this is all they have. In this pitiable case, Lamb and I have promised him ten pounds a-year each, as long as he lives."

One more quotation from Crabb Robinson: "Dec. 16th, 1819. Thursday:—I went after 9 to Lamb's. The party there; Hazlitt too. He and I exchanged a few words. I was the first to speak and he only answered me. Played whist."

To this year belongs a curious entry in the journal of George Ticknor, the American historian. After a description of Godwin and Mrs. Godwin on Snow Hill, he says: "'The true way, however, to see these people was to meet them all together, as I did once at dinner at Godwin's, and once at a convocation or Saturday Night Club, at Hunt's, where they felt themselves bound to show off and produce an effect; for there Lamb's gentle humour, Hunt's passion, and Curran's volubility, Hazlitt's sharpness and point, and Godwin's great head of cold brains, all coming into contact and conflict, and agreeing in nothing but their common hatred of every thing that has been more successful than their own works, made one of the most curious and amusing *olla podrida* I ever met."

Lamb seems out of place in this embittered night scene, and is probably again the victim of the generalising habit; but the passage has interest.

CHAPTER XXXIV

1820

A very Short Chapter—Charles Aders—John Thelwall and the *Champion*—Lamb's Political Epigrams—The Regent and Canning—James Sheridan Knowles—The Wordsworths in London—The Lambs at Cambridge Again—Emma Isola—Mary Lamb Again Ill—Miss Kelly—Thomas Allsop.

TO 1820, in one respect the most important year in Lamb's life, belong only five or six letters, all of which are comparatively trivial, the principal one being from Mary Lamb to Mrs. Vincent Novello, to sympathise with her on the loss of a little girl, the same little girl that prompted Leigh Hunt's essay "Death of Little Children."

Crabb Robinson helps to fill in the gaps :—

"January 3rd, 1820 :—A call on Miss Lamb. Later met Charles and Miss Lamb at Mr. Aders'. I was not in spirits. Aders exhibited his Campo Sacro to L. which he greatly enjoyed. And we had a rubber or two of whist. Mr. and Mrs. Smith also were of the party. We staid long, Aders had provided a profuse supper. L. was temperate but rather dull at the same time. However he seemed to enjoy himself, and that is the truest flattery." Charles Aders, a friend of Robinson, was a merchant of German extraction, with a house in Euston Square packed with pictures. In 1831 Lamb wrote some lines on his collection, and one of the prettiest of his later poems, "Angel Help," was suggested by an engraving in Mrs. Aders' album.

"March 2nd :—I called in the forenoon on Lamb to give him £10, a contribution towards sending Tom

Holcroft to India. He will probably soon set out, and I consider this morning as well spent. Villiers H. is well settled in India and has offered to provide for his brother if he can be sent out. Miss L. told me of a Burney party this evening and I went to James Street. . . Walked home late with the Lambs.

"April 20th. Thursday:—I took tea and spent the evening at Lamb's. . . . Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt were there, people with whom I am not cordial but I nevertheless enjoyed the evening. I took Tom to L."

Robinson does not refer to Lamb's reappearance as a political satirist, but at this period, in the spring and early summer of 1820, his pen from time to time put forth, for Thelwall's *Champion*, a blistering attack on the Regent. John Thelwall, whom we last heard of in 1797 on his way to Stowey, had later settled down to teach elocution and a mode of overcoming impediments of speech; but in 1818 he again entered political life and bought the *Champion*. Lamb's contributions consisted of very bitter little epigrams directed almost entirely against the Regent and those of his friends, principally Canning, whom he believed to be advising him in his treatment of Caroline of Brunswick. When asked if he were a King's or Queen's man, Coleridge had replied that he was not for the Queen, but against the King; but Lamb was for the Queen unconditionally. Here is one of his anti-Georgics (March 18th, 1820):—

THE GODLIKE

In one great man we view with odds
A parallel to all the gods.
Great Jove, that shook heaven with his brow,
Could never match his princely bow.
In him a Bacchus we behold:
Like Bacchus, too, he ne'er grows old,
Like Phœbus next, a flaming lover;
And then he's Mercury—all over.
A Vulcan, for domestic strife,
He lamely lives without his wife.

> And sure—unless his wits be dull—
> Minerva-like, when moon was full,
> He issued from paternal skull.

And here is his sonnet to Alderman Wood, the Queen's principal London friend, at whose house she lodged; the Zany of Debate being Canning, and the pickpocket Peer, Dundas. The date is May 13th, 1820:—

> Hold on thy course uncheck'd, heroic Wood!
> Regardless what the player's son may prate,
> Saint Stephens' fool, the Zany of Debate—
> Who nothing generous ever understood.
> London's twice Prætor! scorn the fool-born jest—
> The stage's scum, and refuse of the players—
> Stale topics against Magistrates and Mayors—
> City and Country both thy worst attest.
> Bid him leave off his shallow Eton wit,
> More fit to sooth the superficial ear
> Of drunken Pitt, and that pickpocket Peer,
> When at their sottish orgies they did sit,
> Hatching mad counsels from inflated vein,
> Till England, and the nations, reeled with pain.

It is interesting that the year which was later to initiate the Essays of Elia should have led also to so much gall. But Lamb's attitude to the Regent is natural enough. Apart altogether from any baseness of character and unscrupulous indulgence, the mere unchivalry of his conduct to his wife would have excited to fury the eulogist of Joseph Paice.

"The year 1820," says Talfourd, "gave Lamb an interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first production of one of his oldest friends—'Virginius.'" The author, James Sheridan Knowles, Talfourd continues, "had been a friend and disciple of Hazlitt from a boy; and Lamb had liked and esteemed him as a hearty companion; but he had not guessed at the extraordinary dramatic power which lay ready for kindling in his brain, and still less at the delicacy of tact with which he had

unveiled the sources of the most profound affections. Lamb had almost lost his taste for acted tragedy, as the sad realities of life had pressed more nearly on him; yet he made an exception in favour of the first and happiest part of 'Virginius,' those paternal scenes, which stand alone in the modern drama, and which Macready informed with the fulness of a father's affection." "Virginius" was performed in London for the first time, with Macready in the title-rôle, on May 17th, 1820. Later in the year Lamb addressed some congratulatory verses to Knowles in the *London Magazine*.

Crabb Robinson again:—

"June 2nd, 1820:—At nine I went to Lamb's, where Mr. and Mrs. Wordsworth were. . . . Lamb was in a good humour: he read some recent compositions, which Wordsworth cordially praised; he seemed to enjoy Lamb's society. Not much was said about his new volume of poems. But he himself spoke of his 'Brownie's Cell' as his favourite. It appears that he had heard of a recluse living on the island when there himself, and afterwards of his being gone, no one knew whither, as the fact on which the poem is founded.

"June 21st, 1820:—After taking tea at home I called at Monkhouse's, and spent an agreeable evening. Wordsworth was very pleasant. Indeed he is uniformly so now. And there is absolutely no pretence for what was always an exaggerated charge against him, that he could talk only of his own poetry, and loves only his own works. He is more indulgent than he used to be of the works of others, even contemporaries and rivals, and is more open to arguments in favour of changes in his own poems. Lamb was in excellent spirits. Talfourd came in late, and we stayed till past twelve. Lamb was at last rather overcome, but it produced nothing but humorous expressions of his desire to go on the Continent, in which I should delight to accompany him.

"June 27th, 1820:—Went to Lamb, found the Wordsworths there, and having walked with them to Westminster Bridge, returned to Lamb, and sat an hour with Macready. He is a very pleasing man, quite gentlemanly in his manners, etc., and sensible and well informed.

"July 18th, 1820:—[At Cambridge on circuit.] After a day's work at Huntingdon, I had just settled for the evening, when I was agreeably surprised by a call from Miss Lamb. I was heartily glad to see her and accompany her to her brother's lodgings. I had a very pleasant rubber of whist with them and a Mrs. Smith. An acceptable relief from circuit society.

"July 20th:—I had nothing to do to-day, and therefore had leisure to accompany Lamb and his sister on a walk behind the colleges. All Lamb's enjoyments are so pure and hearty, that it is an enjoyment to see him enjoy. We walked about the exquisite chapel and the gardens of Trinity."

This shows us that the Lambs spent their summer holiday at Cambridge. Robinson says nothing more of Mrs. Smith, but Lamb carried away her landmarks in his mind and a year or so later reproduced them in the essay "The Gentle Giantess," transferring her home to Oxford and styling her the Widow Blackett. It was also at Cambridge on this occasion that Lamb collected more of his impressions (a truly Elian whim) of "Oxford in the Vacation," the second of the Essays of Elia—to which we are coming directly—and where (and not in a nook at Oriel) he met George Dyer. And I think it was probably on this visit to Cambridge that the Lambs first saw Emma Isola, who was destined to bring so much happiness into their lives—meeting her at the house of Mrs. Paris, a sister of William Ayrton, in Trumpington Street, where she was living with her aunt Miss Humphreys.

Emma Isola was then a little motherless girl of eleven, one of the daughters of Charles Isola, Esquire

Bedell of Cambridge University, and granddaughter of Agostino Isola, an Italian, resident in Cambridge, among whose pupils had been Wordsworth. Of Charles Isola we have a glimpse in Henry Gunning's *Reminiscences of Cambridge :* "On Sept. 5th, 1797, an election took place of an Esquire Bedell in the room of William Matthew, LL.B., Fellow and Bursar of Jesus College, deceased. . . . A candidate appeared in the person of John Ellis, Esq., M.A., a Fellow of King's College. . . . His opponent was Charles Isola, B.A. of Emanuel College, the son of Agostino Isola, a teacher of Italian in this town. The father was generally beloved, particularly by his pupils, who were very numerous. There was a great desire amongst the members of the University, particularly amongst those of his own college, to do something for his son, who was a man of inoffensive manners, and had not, I believe, an enemy in the world ; but his shyness and reserve were so great that it pained him to mix in society. . . . At the election Isola was chosen by a large majority, the numbers being for Isola, 94 ; for Ellis, 42."

The Lambs seemed to have asked Emma to spend Christmas with them, for on January 27th, 1821 (to look forward a little), Charles wrote the following letter to Miss Humphreys :—

"Dear Madam, Carriages to Cambridge are in such request, owing to the Installation, that we have found it impossible to procure a conveyance for Emma before Wednesday, on which day between the hours of 3 and 4 in the afternoon you will see your little friend, with her bloom somewhat impaired by late hours and dissipation, but her gait, gesture, and general manners (I flatter myself) considerably improved by —— *somebody that shall be nameless.* My sister joins me in love to all true Trumpingtonians, not specifying any, to avoid *envy* ; and begs me to assure you that Emma has been a very good girl, which, with certain limitations, I must myself subscribe to. I wish I could cure

her of making dog's ears in books, and pinching them on poor Pompey, who, for one, I dare say, will heartily rejoyce at her departure.

"Dear Madam,

"Yours truly

"foolish C. L."

In 1823, when Charles Isola died, Charles and Mary Lamb seem definitely to have adopted Emma Isola as their daughter.

Leaving Elia for the present, I will finish the domestic year at this point. A letter to Hazlitt in September tells us that Mary Lamb is ill again: "the last thing she read was the 'Thursday Nights' which seem'd to give her unmix'd delight"—referring to the second part of Hazlitt's essay "On the Conversation of Authors" in the *London Magazine* for September, 1820, quoted in Chapter XXXI. For the rest of our information we must go to Crabb Robinson:—

"November 18th, 1820:—The afternoon was agreeable. I dined with the Wordsworths, and Lambs, and Mr. Kenyon, at Monkhouse's. It was an agreeable company and a good dinner, though I could not help sleeping. Wordsworth and Monkhouse either followed my example, or set me one, and Lamb talked as if he were asleep. We brought him away in a tolerable state, though poor Miss L. was troubled about him." Kenyon was John Kenyon, author of a "Rhymed Plea for Tolerance," who is best known as the friend of the Brownings.

"November 21st, 1820:—I went late to Lamb's, and stayed an hour there very pleasantly. The Wordsworths were there, and Dr. Stoddart. The Doctor was very civil to me. Politics were hardly touched on, for Miss Kelly stepped in, who drew our attention to a far more agreeable subject. She pleased me much. She is neither young nor handsome, but very agreeable: her voice and manner those of a person who knows her own worth but is at the same time not

desirous to assume upon it. She talks like a sensible woman. Barry Cornwall, too, came in. He said but little to any one except Wordsworth, and that in a half whisper." This entry shows us that Miss Kelly had resumed her friendly intercourse with the Lambs, as if nothing had happened.

"December 24th :—Went to Lamb's at Dalston. W. Godwin was there. We played whist an hour and then I walked with W. G. to town. L. lent me, and I read at night, *Sintram and his Companions*, from the German of Fouqué.

"December 27th :—Took tea at Lamb's. One of his monthly parties ; less agreeable than usual. His vulgar brother there, whose manners are intolerable, and Phillips. And late Ayrton, also Talfourd, stepped in."

In this year we might perhaps take note of a new friend in the person of Thomas Allsop, aged twenty-five, the "favourite disciple of Coleridge," as he was called. Allsop, who was in business as a silk merchant, was a man of very generous nature, and he seems early to have discovered that one road to Lamb's heart (as Lamb himself publicly stated later) was by presents of game. Writing to Miss Wordsworth in January, 1821, Lamb says that Allsop sends hares and pheasants twice a week : "I have almost forgotten butcher's meat as Plebeian." Allsop's benefactions to Coleridge were of a more substantial character.

A few years later, in 1825, the Lambs and the Allsops shared lodgings at Enfield, and although there is no indication that they ever became intimate on the highest plane, they were very friendly. Were it not for such relations as subsisted between them, we should be without many stories of Lamb that are to be found in the *Letters, Conversations and Recollections of Coleridge*, which Allsop compiled. I quote a few passages :—

"I am quite aware that I can convey no notion of

what Charles Lamb *was*, hardly even of what he said, as far the greatest part of its value depended upon the manner in which it was said. Even the best of his jokes—and *how good* they were you can never know—depended upon the circumstances, which to narrate would be to overlay and weary the attention.

"The following lines of Lloyd will convey some idea, though very imperfect, of this model-man :—

> 'The child of impulse ever to appear,
> And yet through duty's path strictly to steer!
>
> Oh Lamb, thou art a mystery to me!
> Thou art so prudent and so mad with wildness,
> Thou art a source of everlasting glee!
> Yet desolation of the very childless
> Has been thy lot! Never in one like thee
> Did I see worth majestic from its wildness;
> So far in thee from being an annoyance,
> E'en to the vicious 'tis a source of joyance.'

"He asked me what I thought of Coleridge. I spoke as I thought. 'You should have seen him twenty years ago,' said he, with one of his sweet smiles, 'when he was with me at the Cat and Salutation in Newgate Market. *Those were* days (or nights), but they were marked with a white stone. Such were his extraordinary powers, that when it was time for him to go and be married, the landlord entreated his stay, and offered him free quarters if he would only talk.' [1]

"'I [said Lamb] advised Coleridge to alter the lines in Christabel :—

> 'Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
> Hath a toothless mastiff bitch,

into—

> 'Sir Leoline, the Baron round,
> Hath a toothless mastiff hound;

but Coleridge, who has no alacrity in altering, changed

[1] Mr. Thomas Hutchinson thinks it more likely to have been the landlord of the Angel, in Butcher Hall Street, where Coleridge also had lodged.

this first termination to " which," but still left in the other, " bitch." '

" ' Irving [Lamb is still speaking] once came back to ask me if I could ever get in a word with Coleridge. " No ! " said I, " I never want." " Why, perhaps it is better not," said the parson, and went away, determined how to behave in future.'

" Wordsworth, the *greatest* poet of these times. Still he is not, nor yet is any man, an ' Ancient Mariner.'

" The conversation turned one night on the evidence against the Queen, Caroline of Brunswick, especially Majocchi. Lamb said he should like to see them ; he would ask them to supper. Mr. Talfourd observed, ' You would not sit with them ? ' ' Yes,' said Lamb, ' I would sit with anything but a hen or a tailor.'

" Somerset House, Whitehall Chapel (the old Banqueting Hall), the church at Limehouse and the new church at Chelsea, with the Bell house at Chelsea College, which always reminded him of Trinity College, Cambridge, were the objects most interesting to him in London. He did not altogether agree with Wordsworth, who thought the view from Harewood-place one of the finest in old London ; he admired more the houses at the Bond-street corner of George-street, which Manning said were built of bricks resembling in colour the great wall of China."

Allsop also records some conversation at a Sunday dinner alone with Lamb, when Lamb delivered himself of some very free utterances concerning authoresses. " Spoke of Mrs. Inchbald as the only endurable clever woman he had ever known ; called them impudent, forward, unfeminine, and unhealthy in their minds. Instanced, amongst many others, Mrs. Barbauld, who was a torment and curse to her husband. ' Yet,' said Lamb, ' Letitia was only just tinted ; she was not what the she-dogs now call an intellectual woman.' " Patmore also mentions Lamb's whimsical intolerance of the writing sisterhood. " We spoke of L. E. L.,

and Lamb said—' If she belonged to me I would lock her up and feed her on bread and water till she left off writing poetry. A female poet, or female author of any kind, ranks below an actress, I think.' "

Allsop, who, like so many of Lamb's friends, was always to be found on the side of the minority, threw himself into the Chartist movement, and later sailed to America to avoid arrest on the groundless charge of complicity in Orsini's attempt on the life of Napoleon III in December, 1857—the Italian having arrived in Paris for his purpose with a passport bearing Allsop's name. He survived until 1880.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE *LONDON MAGAZINE* AND *ELIA*

1820–1825

The *London Magazine*—John Scott—His Death—*Blackwood* and Lamb—"Christopher North"—John Taylor—New Friends—H. F. Cary—Thomas Griffiths Wainewright—John Clare—The *London's* Decay—The Birth of *Elia*—Lamb's Place in Literature—Lamb and Hazlitt as Influences—The Evolution of an Essay—Landor's Praise of *Elia*—Swinburne's Eulogy—Walter Pater on Lamb.

TO the great event of 1820 we must now devote ourselves—Lamb's enrolment as a contributor to the new *London Magazine*, and the inception of those essays upon which his fame most securely rests.

The first number of the *London Magazine* (an old title) was published by Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, under the editorship of John Scott, in January, 1820. Scott, the friend of Haydon, had been the editor of the *Champion* before Thelwall bought it, and Lamb, as we have seen, had written something for that paper in Scott's time. Hence perhaps Scott's invitation to him to write now, although Talfourd tells us that his association with the *London* was due to Hazlitt.

John Scott was born in 1783; after a short term in the War Office he had become an editor, and he had written two excellent books of travel, *A Visit to Paris in 1814*, and *Paris Revisited in 1815*. Talfourd says of him, after enumerating the chief writers on the staff: "Over these contributors John Scott presided, himself a critic of remarkable candour, eloquence, and discrimination, unfettered by the dogmas of contending schools of poetry and art; apt to discern the good

and beautiful in all ; and having, as editor, that which Kent recognised in Lear, which subjects revere in kings, and boys admire in schoolmasters, and contributors should welcome in editors—*authority* ;—not manifested in a worrying, teasing, intolerable interference in small matters, but in a judicious and steady superintendence of the whole ; with a wise allowance of the occasional excesses of wit and genius." And again : "Never was a periodical work commenced with happier auspices, numbering a list of contributors more original in thought, more fresh in spirit, more sportive in fancy, or directed by an editor better qualified by nature and study to preside than this 'London.'"

Scott was undoubtedly an editor of genius. Having attracted to himself some very able writers, chief of whom at first was Hazlitt, he stimulated them—as is the nature of a born editor—to surpass themselves. Lamb, who joined during the summer, also responded to Scott's stimulus ; and everything was going well with the magazine when Scott was so ill-advised as to be drawn into a contest with *Blackwood*, the magazine at whose supremacy the new *London* was particularly levelled. *Blackwood* had said some caustic things about Cockneys in literature ; Scott replied in the number for January, 1821. Literary quarrels in those days had more fury than we can muster now, and there was no mincing of epithets ; but Scott made a mistake which he might easily have avoided had he not been hurried : he imputed to John Gibson Lockhart not only the authorship of certain of *Blackwood's* criticisms, but also the editorship of the magazine, and, in the face of Lockhart's denial, maintained the truth of the imputation. Lockhart took the matter very seriously and, through his friend Jonathan Henry Christie, sent Scott a challenge. Into the merits of the quarrel this is not the place to enter. Andrew Lang stated the case very clearly in his *Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart*, and it is difficult to acquit Scott

of certain unfortunate hesitancies. In the end, after a painful delay, although the duel with Lockhart was not fought, Scott was inextricably involved in a meeting with Lockhart's second. It took place at Chalk Farm on February 16th, 1821, with pistols. Scott, whose second was Peter George Patmore (afterwards a friend of Lamb's), was shot above the hip, and he died on February 27th—the first and last magazine editor in this country thus to end his life. Editors should stick to ink. Literature may be said to have sustained a great loss, for Scott had the welfare of the *London* at heart and was in the way to discover and inspire other good writers.

(Lamb, I might say in passing, came in for some of the abuse levelled at the Cockneys. In *Blackwood* for November, 1820, Maginn, writing as Olinthus Petre, D.D., affected to find every kind of bad taste in the essay on Christ's Hospital. In May, 1821, he apologised, although not with much generosity, absolving Lamb and blaming the bad Cockney influence. In 1822 John Wilson, "Christopher North," got to work with the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, and Lamb was mentioned again, but with more kindness. In the second *Nox*, in a review of periodical literature, Elia is thus referred to :—

"*Buller.* 'Taylor and Hessey's Magazine—is it better?'

"*Tickler.* 'Sometimes much better, and often much worse. Elia in his happiest moods delights me; he is a fine soul; but when he is dull, his dulness sets human stupidity at defiance. He is like a well-bred, ill-trained pointer. He has a fine nose, but he won't or can't range. He keeps always close to your foot, and then he points larks and tit-mice. You see him snuffing and snoking and brandishing his tail with the most impassioned enthusiasm, and then drawn round into a semicircle he stands beautifully—dead set. You expect a burst of partridges, or a towering cock-pheasant, when lo, and behold, away flits a lark, or you discover a mouse's nest, or there is absolutely nothing at all. Perhaps a shrew has been there the day before.—Yet if Elia were mine, I would not part with him, for all his faults.'"

Three months later Christopher North printed his

"Metricum Symposium," where, ticking off the *London Magazine* writers, he says :—

> And this bumper to Lamb we send gratefully greeting,
> For we love his deep baaing and beautiful bleating.

It will thus be seen that the Scotchmen did not allow their contempt for the Cockneys to blind them to Lamb's merits, although they may have grudged their praise. Wilson, as we shall see, came to know Lamb personally and to love his work ; and a few years later Lamb himself was among *Maga's* contributors.)

Upon Scott's death the interest of Baldwin, Cradock & Joy in the *London Magazine* seems to have evaporated ; and they were glad to sell it in the summer of 1821 to Messrs. Taylor & Hessey, whose imprint first appears in the number for August of that year. Taylor & Hessey had a fair name as publishers, having issued, among other works, the poems of Keats. The mistake which they made in connection with the *London Magazine* was not to appoint an editor, a policy which proved steadily disastrous. John Taylor, the head of the firm, with whom Lamb had all his dealings, took the control of the magazine into his own hands, established a periodical dinner of contributors in the new premises at 13 Waterloo Place (which had been taken in addition to 93 Fleet Street), and introduced Thomas Hood as sub-editor. Taylor, however, was far from being another Scott ; his own literary achievements, such as they were, had been concerned with the identification of Sir Philip Francis with Junius, in itself a meritorious action, but no guarantee of good editorship. (Later, on ceasing to be a publisher, he took to economics and biblical criticism.) Not only through want of imagination, but also by a policy of penuriousness, Taylor in time ruined this most promising property. His partner, James Augustus Hessey (1785-1870), who had less part in Lamb's life, was the father of the late Archdeacon Hessey, for whom and his brother, when

at school, Lamb once wrote epigrams. Keats called him "Mistessey."

At the first, under Scott and Baldwin, I do not fancy that Lamb had any close association with the other writers for the *London Magazine*; but when in 1821 it passed into the hands of Taylor & Hessey, a more companionable era set in. At the monthly dinners Lamb quickly made a few new friends and many new acquaintances. To the chief new friends, Bernard Barton and Thomas Hood, we shall come later.

Perhaps Lamb was drawn to none of his *London Magazine* associates, in the second degree, more than to the Rev. H. Francis Cary, the translator of Dante, whom Coleridge had met on the sands at Littlehampton in 1817. Cary, who afterwards became an assistant keeper of the Printed Books in the British Museum, where Lamb and his sister visited him, contributed to the *London* a series of papers on old French poets, continuations of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, and other articles. Writing to Manning in 1832 Lamb says: "C. is a dear fellow, with but two vices, which in any less good than himself would be crimes past redemption. He has no relish for Parson Adams—hints that he might not be a very great Greek scholar after all (does Fielding hint that he was a Porson?)—and prefers 'Ye shepherds so cheerful and gay,' and 'My banks they are furnished with bees,' to 'The Schoolmistress.'" In the same letter Lamb calls him "the flower of clergymen"; but he once told him in conversation that though he was perhaps as good as Dr. Primrose he was not so good as Parson Adams. The memoir of Cary, by his son, has this story: "I remember that a quotation from one of our dramatists provoked a round of puns on the names of various herbs; the last two introduced had been 'mint and anise,' when Lamb sputtered out, 'Now, Cary, it's your turn.' 'It's cumin,' was the prompt rejoinder. 'Then I won't make another pun to-day,' stammered Lamb." It

was Cary who wrote the verses on Lamb's grave at Edmonton.

At the opposite pole to Cary among the new acquaintances was "Janus Weathercock," or, to give him his true name (now infamous), Thomas Griffiths Wainewright. For Wainewright Lamb nourished a tenderness which ever since has perplexed and disappointed many good men, chief among them Talfourd, who devoted too large a portion of the first edition of the *Final Memorials* to the description, with the fervid passion of a prosecuting counsel, of Wainewright's appalling turpitude. (Many of the pages containing the indictment were afterwards excised.) But in 1821 Wainewright's depravity was yet to be. We ought not, I think, to forget that his downfall proceeded from extravagances that did not reach a culmination until later; and that Lamb knew and liked only the Wainewright of this early period: an amusing conceited dandified flâneur, different from Lamb in every respect but warm-heartedness (real or apparent—probably real to Lamb at any rate) and love of good pictures and good phrases. In those days I think it very likely that he could be quite charming. Yet even if Lamb had suspected the presence of the seeds of crime, he was not the man to pass judgment on potentialities. Sufficient for the day was its goodness.

Thomas Griffiths Wainewright was twenty-six in the year that the *London Magazine* was founded. He was outwardly a very splendid person: he rode a noble horse, "Contributor," in the Park; his hands were heavy with rings; he exhibited at the Royal Academy; he wrote rattle-pated articles in the *London* and elsewhere, which, for the most part coxcombical and frivolous, now and then prove him to have possessed fine sensibilities and artistic acumen. He was one of the few who recognised the genius of Blake during his lifetime, and who purchased copies of the original issue of the *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience*. Blake,

in return, described Wainewright's Academy picture for 1822 as "very fine." But his greatest claim to our consideration is that Lamb liked him and that he wrote prettily of Lamb. Lamb enjoyed his society immensely, possibly a little because Wainewright enjoyed his; he was among his guests in Great Marlborough Street, as were Talfourd, Procter and Macready; he refers to him as "kind-hearted Janus"; and in 1831, when Moxon was taking over the *Englishman's Magazine*, he recommended Janus as a contributor—not knowing, I imagine, that England had then become too hot for that voluptuary.

In January, 1823, after Lamb had written of the death of Elia, Wainewright thus pleasantly addressed his ghost: "Sir Thomas Browne was a 'bosom cronie' of his—so was Burton, and old Fuller. In his amorous vein he dallied with that peerless Duchess of many-folio odour;—and with the hey-day comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher he induced light dreams. He would deliver critical touches on these like one inspired; but it was good to let him choose his own game:—if another began, even on the acknowledged pets, he was liable to interrupt—or rather append, in a mode difficult to define, whether as misapprenhensive or mischievous. One night, at C——'s, the above dramatic partners were the temporary subject of chat. Mr. * * * commended the passion and haughty style of a tragedy (I don't know which of them), but was instantly taken up by Elia; who told him, '*That* was nothing,—the lyrics were the high things—the lyrics!' and so having stricken * * * with some amaze—he concluded with a brief intense eulogy on the 'Little Thief!'" Again: "By the bye our critics seem hardly aware of the intimate connexion, or rather of the identity, of the primal seeds of poetry and painting; nor that any true advancement in the serious study of one art co-generates a proportionate perfection in the other. If a man who did not feel Michel Agnolo

should talk of his gusto for Milton, depend upon it he deceives one of two persons—you or himself:—so likewise *vice versâ*. The moment you entered Elia's room you would swear to his selection of authors, by his selection of framed prints—(Leonardos and Early Raffaellos)."

Here we may leave Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, painter, essayist, critic, forger, poisoner and friend of Charles Lamb. He died in 1852, in penal servitude, in Van Diemen's Land. His memory—the sweeter part—lives in Lamb's letters and the *London Magazine*; the other part in the annals of crime, in Lytton's *Lucretia*, in Talfourd's *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb* (first edition), and in Dickens's *Hunted Down*.

Another contributor to the *London Magazine* known personally to Lamb was John Clare, the rural poet of Northamptonshire, who was to have been another Burns but succeeded only in being a better Bloomfield. Clare was published by Taylor & Hessey, his chief literary friend being Octavius Gilchrist, the antiquary and editor of old plays, who knew Clare before he came to London, and was permitted by his friend Gifford to review the Northamptonshire poet so favourably in the *Quarterly* as to make his fame. Clare had too facile a gift of versification, but many of his poems are marked by sweetness and rustic charm. Lamb wrote him two letters, which are preserved, and they exchanged books.

Clare's account of his meeting with Lamb is interesting: Lamb "was sitting with his tobacco-pipe and a great snuff-box on his left hand, into which he used to dip frequently. He was in outrageous spirits, and began to make puns 'on poets and hackney-coaches,' sipping from his tumbler all the time. At last Miss Lamb came in with good-natured expostulation, only to be met by Lamb's boisterous reply, 'Do we not know the value of a rustic swain—I mean of res—restraint?'"

It is not likely that Lamb and Clare were really intimate, but that they had at least one good evening together we know from Wainewright's article from which I have already quoted: "And first, then, for John Clare; for *first* doth he stand in the sixth volume. 'Princely Clare,' as Elia would call thee, some three hours after the cloth was drawn—Alas! good Clare, never again shall thou and he engage in those high combats, those wit-fights! Never shall his companionable draught cause thee an after-look of anxiety into the tankard!—no more shall he, pleasantly-malicious, make thy ears tingle, and thy cheeks glow, with the sound of that perplexing constrainment! that conventional gagging-bill!—that Grammar!! till in the bitterness of thy heart thou cursedest Lindley Murray by all the stars.—Not once again shall thy sweetly simple Doric phrase and accent beget the odious *pun*. Thou mayest imbibe thy ale in peace, and defy Priscian unchecked,—Elia is gone!—Little didst thou think that evening would be the last, when thou and I, and two or three more, . . . parted with the humanity-loving Elia beneath the chaste beams of the watery moon, warmed with his hearty cheer—the fragrant steam of his '*great plant*,'—his savoury conversation, and the genuine good-nature of his cousin Bridget gilding all. There was something solemn in the manner of our clasping palms,—it was first 'hands round,' then 'hands across.'" [1]

[1] In some verses in the *London Magazine* for August, 1824, entitled "The Idler's Epistle to John Clare," by Elton, are the lines:—

Does Agnus fling his crotchets wild,
"In wit a man," in heart a child?—

Agnus being of course Lamb. And in Hone's *Year Book* for November 18th (1831), is this sonnet from Clare's pen:—

TO CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.

Friend Lamb, thy choice was good, to love the lore
Of our old by-gone bards, whose racy page,

Among other contributors whom Lamb esteemed were Allan Cunningham, the gigantic Scotch ballad writer, who had been contributing to the hostile *Blackwood* but joined the *London* and wrote for it "Tales of Lyddal Cross" and other stories, sketches and poems over the signature "Nalla"; George Darley, a shy stammering poet, the author of *Sylvia*, who criticised the modern drama adversely over the signature "John Lacy," and contributed a series of "Dramaticles"; and John Hamilton Reynolds, Hood's brother-in-law and collaborator, and the friend of Keats, who described lightly, over the signature "Edward Herbert," various social events, and now and then played up gaily to Lamb's humour.

Under Taylor, as I have said, the *London Magazine* steadily declined. Lamb's letters give indication enough of the cause. One by one the principal contributors dropped away, "affronted" is Lamb's word; Hazlitt, Procter, Wainewright all went; Lamb himself was losing interest. At the end of 1824 a special effort was made, the price was raised by a shilling, and Lamb began to be busy once more, after some languid months. But the spirit had fled; and during the year 1825 the magazine was sold to Henry Southern and its career ceased to be worth study.

It was in the *London Magazine* for August, 1820, when Lamb was forty-five, that was printed the first

> Rich mellowing Time makes sweeter than before.
> The blossom left—for the long garner'd store
> Of fruitage, now right luscious in its age,
> Although to fashion's taste austere,—what more
> Can be expected from the popular rage
> For tinsel gauds that are to gold preferred?
> Me much it grieves, as I did erst presage,
> Vain fashion's foils had every heart deterred
> From the warm, homely phrase of other days,
> Until thy Woodvil's ancient voice I heard;
> And now right fain, yet fearing, honest bard,
> I pause to greet thee with so poor a praise.

of the essays which were to make his name a household word. This essay, a passage from which I have quoted in Chapter VI, was entitled "Recollections of the South-Sea House," where Lamb, as we have seen, had been a clerk in a very humble capacity in 1791-92. His first *Elia* essay, therefore, although he had probably fortified his youthful impressions by later visits to his brother's rooms at the South-Sea House, consisted very largely of material gathered when he was in his seventeenth year. It is I think probably unique for a man who all his life had meant to be a writer not to find himself until he was forty-five, and then to do so with material fetched from his teens.

The history of Lamb's pseudonym is told in a letter to John Taylor, the publisher, in July, 1821, in which he remarks, concerning his first essay—"having a brother now there [at the South-Sea House], and doubting how he might relish certain descriptions in it, I clapt down the name of Elia to it, which passed off pretty well, for Elia himself added the function of an author to that of a scrivener, like myself." Lamb adds: "I went the other day (not having seen him [Elia] for a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago, and I knew not of it. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think; and 'tis all he has left me." All trace both of the original Elia and of his writings has vanished.[1]

Possibly in the circumstance that the pseudonym of Elia was adopted at all we may find a reason for the difference between the comparative thinness of Lamb's pre-Elian writings and the Elian richness and colour. There are some writers (paradoxical though it seems) who can never express themselves so freely

[1] Mrs. Cowden Clarke records in a marginal note to her copy of Procter's Memoir that Lamb once remarked that "Elia" formed an anagram of "a lie."

as when, adopting a dramatic standpoint, they affect to be some one else. Goldsmith, who has affinity to Lamb, was always happier in his work when he imagined his pen to be held by another. The innocent imposture confers courage, disarms diffidence. We can easily believe that Lamb at first—in the opening essay on "The South-Sea House"—felt more at home in the assumed character of Elia than in his own person; the mere invention must have put him into merry pin. Later, of course, except when the time came to append his signature, he forgot Elia altogether, or rather assimilated him, retaining only what was identical with himself; but that does not affect the matter. It was Elia who broke the ice, and in such a business as a series of very personal essays a favourable beginning is of the highest value.

Barry Cornwall suggests that Lamb had to be asked several times before he would consent to begin the *Elia* series. "He was himself eminently modest; he never put himself forward: he was always sought. He had much to say on many subjects, and he was repeatedly pressed to say this, before he consented to do so. He was almost teased into writing the Elia essays. . . . I know that high pay and frequent importunity failed to induce him to squander his strength in careless essays: he waited until he could give them their full share of meaning and humour." Lamb's payment for *Elia* was twenty guineas a sheet—or so he told Colburn—a sheet being sixteen pages. But Barry Cornwall states that he was paid two or three times the amount of the others, who received a pound a page. Lamb told Moore that he had received £170 for two years' *Elia*. There seems to have been considerable delay in collecting Baldwin's payments.

The life of Charles Lamb, as these pages testify, is the narrative of one who was a man and brother first, an East India clerk next, and a writer afterwards. Hence, although from time to time we have had and

shall have glimpses of some of the finest intellects of his day—the sixty years between February, 1775, and December, 1834—the story is that rather of a private individual who chanced to have literary genius than of a man of letters in the ordinary sense of the term. The work of Charles Lamb forms no integral part of the history of English literature : he is not in the main current, he is hardly in the side current of the great stream. As that noble river flows steadily onward it brims here and there into a clear and peaceful bay. Of such tributary backwaters, which are of the stream yet not in it, Sir Thomas Browne is one, Charles Lamb another.

In other words, the Essays of Elia are perhaps as easily dispensed with as any work of fancy and imagination in the language ; and a large number of persons not uninterested in English literature attain to great heights of ignorance concerning them. Their " facts " are not of the utilitarian order ; their humour leads rarely to loud laughter, rather to the quiet smile ; they are not stories ; they are not poems ; they are not difficult enough to suggest " mental improvement " to those who count it loss unless they are puzzled, nor simple enough for those who demand of their authors no confounded nonsense.

At the same time English literature has nothing that in its way is better than *Elia's* best. The blend of sanity, sweet reasonableness, tender fancy, high imagination, sympathetic understanding of human nature, and humour, now wistful, now frolicsome, with literary skill of unsurpassed delicacy, makes *Elia* unique.

Yet it is still perhaps not clear why Lamb holds the place that is his in English literature and in our hearts. Why is *Elia* so treasured a volume ? The answer, I hope, is to be read again and again between the lines of this book. I have failed utterly if it is not legible there. In a few words it is this—because Lamb describes with so much sympathy most of the normal

feelings of mankind, because he understands so much and is so cheering to the lowly, so companionable to the luckless. He is always on the side of those who need a friend. He is "in love with the green earth," he never soars out of reach, never withholds his tolerance for our weaknesses. A proverb has been called the wisdom of many and the wit of one: the definition may be extended to the Essays of Elia, in which the essentials of experiences common to us all are offered to each reader in terms peculiar to his own case. Hartley Coleridge wrote of his father's friend, that he always took things "by the better handle"—that, again, is why *Elia* stands so high upon the lists of books which some of us cannot do without.

It is by *Elia* that Lamb stands where he does; and our prose literature probably contains no work more steeped in personality. What Shakespeare's essays would have been like we cannot conjecture; what Lamb's plays were like we know; and the two men technically are not comparable. But in tolerance, in the higher cleanliness, in enjoyment of fun, in love of sweetness, in pleasure in gentlemen, in whimsical humour, Lamb and Shakespeare have much in common. Lamb's criticisms of Shakespeare, though not necessarily better than those of certain other writers, seem to come from one peculiarly qualified to speak by reason of superior intimacy or familiarity. He writes more as Shakespeare's friend than any other.[1]

Lamb found the essay a comparatively frigid thing; he left it warm and flexible and companionable. But he founded no school. Hazlitt may have done so, but not Lamb. This is because Hazlitt was in the direct line from Dryden and Addison; Lamb was an

[1] To speak thus of Lamb with his finished work before us is not a difficult task; but Leigh Hunt, I like to remember, had the prescience to say something of the kind some years before Lamb had thought of *Elia*. In reviewing Keats' *Poems* in the *Examiner* in 1817, Hunt refers to Lamb's "tact of humanity, his modest Shakespearian wisdom."

individual sport. Hazlitt wrote the prose of his own day as well as he could; Lamb played many pranks, annihilated "Progress," in his own words wrote "for antiquity." To try to write like Lamb is perhaps the surest road to literary disaster; to try to write like Hazlitt is one of the best things a young man can do. Yet it is doubtful if Thackeray or Stevenson would have been quite the same had Lamb not come first.

From time to time I have already quoted some of the more personal and therefore the more exquisite passages of *Elia*, and as I shall have occasion to quote others it is unnecessary here to lay emphasis upon the beauty, wisdom and humour of these essays. But as an example of Lamb's deliberate Elian method in contrast with his ordinary running epistolary manner, I might print the humorous letter to Barron Field concerning the thievishness of Australia, written in 1817, and follow it with a portion of the finished essay on the same theme written in 1822: another of the many proofs which we possess that Lamb always kept all his thoughts on a subject near at hand. This is from the letter:—

"Well, and how does the land of thieves use you? and how do you pass your time in your extra-judicial intervals? Going about the streets with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking for an honest man? You may look long enough, I fancy. Do give me some notion of the manners of the inhabitants where you are. They don't thieve all day long, do they? No human property could stand such continuous battery. And what do they do when they an't stealing?

"Have you got a theatre? What pieces are performed? Shakespear's, I suppose—not so much for the poetry, as for his having once been in danger of leaving his country on account of certain 'small deer.'

"Have you poets among you? Cursed plagiarists, I fancy, if you have any. I would not trust an idea or a pocket-handkerchief of mine among 'em. You are almost competent to answer Lord Bacon's problem, whether a nation of atheists can subsist together. You are practically in one:—

"So thievish 'tis, that the eighth commandment itself
Scarce seemeth there to be."

This is from the essay :—

"I cannot image to myself whereabouts you are. When I try to fix it, Peter Wilkins's island comes across me. Sometimes you seem to be in the *Hades* of *Thieves*. I see Diogenes prying among you with his perpetual fruitless lantern. What must you be willing by this time to give for the sight of an honest man! You must almost have forgotten how *we* look. And tell me, what your Sydneyites do? are they th**v*ng all day long? Merciful heaven! what property can stand against such a depredation! The kangaroos—your Aborigines—do they keep their primitive simplicity un-Europe-tainted, with those little short fore-puds, looking like a lesson framed by nature to the pickpocket! Marry, for diving into fobs they are rather lamely provided *à priori*; but if the hue and cry were once up, they would show as fair a pair of hindshifters as the expertest loco-motor in the colony.—We hear the most improbable tales at this distance. Pray, is it true that the young Spartans among you are born with six fingers, which spoils their scanning? —It must look very odd; but use reconciles. For their scansion, it is less to be regretted, for if they take it into their heads to be poets, it is odds but they turn out, the greater part of them, vile plagiarists.—Is there much difference to see to between the son of a th**f and the grandson? or where does the taint stop? Do you bleach in three or in four generations?—I have many questions to put, but ten Delphic voyages can be made in a shorter time than it will take to satisfy my scruples.—Do you grow your own hemp? —What is your staple trade, exclusive of the national profession, I mean? Your lock-smiths, I take it, are some of your great capitalists."

That shows us something of Lamb's manner of relishing a joke, turning it to view it from every side, collecting the light in every facet. It shows us also the pains that went to the perfecting of a period. Lamb was indeed as careful a writer as we have had, and in a peculiar degree was responsible for his words.

There is no lack of good criticism of *Elia* from which to select praises. I content myself with three examples, beginning with a heightened passage in a letter from Landor to Leigh Hunt's *London Journal*, in 1835; continuing with a beautiful appreciation by the late Algernon Charles Swinburne, who always wrote nobly of Lamb; and ending with Walter Pater.

This is Landor: "We have swept into another room

the frippery of Gibbon, the inflexible plush that overloaded the distorted muscles of Johnson, and the broken trinkets, the inextricable inanities, the ancient dust and recent cobweb, of Harris and Monboddo. We come again into the open air and see Old England all around us. Thanks to Goldsmith! thanks to Southey! thanks in the highest Heavens to Charles Lamb! The *Essays of Elia* will afford a greater portion of pure delight to the intellectual and the virtuous, to all who look into the human heart for what is good and graceful in it, whether near the surface or below, than any other two prose volumes, modern or ancient."

And this is Swinburne: "As many talk of Robin Hood who never shot in his bow, so do many talk of Charles Lamb who have never entered in spirit into the homely and happy sanctuary of his more private or inward presence. But for all who love him the charm of that companionship is alike indefinable and incomparable. It pervades his work as with an odour of sweet old-world flowers or spices long laid by among fine linens and rare brocades in some such old oaken or cedarn cabinet as his grandmother might have opened to rejoice the wondering senses of her boyish visitor at 'Blakesmoor.' His own words may best express the special feeling of tenderness and delight, familiar reverence and satisfied affection, which the very sound or thought of his 'gentle name' wakes up always anew within us into warmth and freshness of life. 'The names of some of our poets,' avows Elia in one of his last essays, with a graceful touch of apology for the fanciful confession, 'sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of Milton or of Shakespeare. It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.' And even so do we now find a homely magic in the name of Lamb, a

special fragrance in the fame of it, such as hardly seems to hang about the statelier sound of Coleridge's or Wordsworth's or Shelley's.

"No good criticism of Lamb, strictly speaking, can ever be written; because nobody can do justice to his work who does not love it too well to feel himself capable of giving judgment on it. And if such a reader as this should undertake to enter the lists against any of Lamb's detractors, or to engage in debate with any of his half-hearted and semi-supercilious partisans, he would doubtless find himself driven or tempted to break all bounds of critical reason in his panegyric of a genius so beloved. Question or denial of Lamb's dramatic powers might goad him on to maintain that *John Woodvil* is the only tragedy in the language which may properly be set beside *Hamlet*, and *The Wife's Trial* the one comedy which may hold its own if compared with *Much Ado about Nothing*. Let me not be suspected of any desire to maintain this thesis if I avow my enjoyment and admiration of Lamb's tragedy, his comedy, and his farce. Of his essays and letters, humorous or pathetic, prosaic or fantastic, erratic or composed, what is there to be said but that it would be a feat far easier to surpass all others than to approach the best of these? But the truth is simple and indisputable that no labour could be at once so delightful and so useless, so attractive and so vain, as the task of writing in praise of Lamb. Any man or any child who can feel anything of his charm utters better praise of him in silence than any array of epithets or periods could give. Any man or any woman who can feel nothing of his charm is outside the pale of any possible influence or impression from any reasoning or any enthusiasm of others."

I should like to close this chapter by quoting from Walter Pater's *Appreciations* a passage of delicate analysis of the mind of *Elia*: "Seeing things always by the light of an understanding more entire than is

possible for ordinary minds, of the whole mechanism of humanity, and seeing also the manner, the outward mode or fashion, always in strict connexion with the spiritual condition which determined it, a humourist such as Charles Lamb anticipates the enchantment of distance; and the characteristics of places, ranks, habits of life, are transfigured for him, even now and in advance of time, by poetic light; justifying what some might condemn as mere sentimentality, in the effort to hand on unbroken the tradition of such fashion or accent. 'The praise of beggars,' 'the cries of London,' the traits of actors just grown 'old,' the spots in 'town' where the country, its fresh green and fresh water, still lingered on, one after another, amidst the bustle; the quaint, dimmed, just played-out farces, he had relished so much, coming partly through them to understand the earlier English theatre as a thing once really alive; those fountains and sun-dials of old gardens, of which he entertains such dainty discourse:—he feels the poetry of these things, as the poetry of things old indeed, but surviving as an actual part of the life of the present, and as something quite different from the poetry of things flatly gone from us and antique, which come back to us, if at all, as entire strangers, like Scott's old Scotch-border personages, their oaths and armour. Such gift of appreciation depends, as I said, on the habitual apprehension of men's life as a whole—its organic wholeness, as extending even to the least things in it—of its outward manner in connexion with its inward temper; and it involves a fine perception of the congruities, the musical accordance between humanity and its environment of custom, society, personal intercourse; as if all this, with its meetings, partings, ceremonies, gesture, tones of speech, were some delicate instrument on which an expert performer is playing.

"These are some of the characteristics of Elia, one essentially an essayist, and of the true family of Mon-

taigne, 'never judging,' as he says, 'system-wise of things, but fastening on particulars'; saying all things as it were on chance occasion only, and by way of pastime, yet succeeding thus, 'glimpse-wise,' in catching and recording more frequently than others 'the gayest, happiest attitude of things'; a casual writer for dreamy readers, yet always giving the reader so much more than he seemed to propose. There is something of the follower of George Fox about him, and the Quaker's belief in the inward light coming to one passive, to the mere wayfarer, who will be sure at all events to lose no light which falls by the way—glimpses, suggestions, delightful half-apprehensions, profound thoughts of old philosophers, hints of the innermost reason in things, the full knowledge of which is held in reserve; all the varied stuff, that is, of which genuine essays are made.

"And with him, as with Montaigne, the desire of self-portraiture is, below all more superficial tendencies, the real motive in writing at all—a desire closely connected with that intimacy, that modern subjectivity, which may be called the *Montaignesque* element in literature. What he designs is to give you himself, to acquaint you with his likeness; but must do this, if at all, indirectly, being indeed always more or less reserved, for himself and his friends; friendship counting for so much in his life, that he is jealous of anything that might jar or disturb it, even to the length of a sort of insincerity, to which he assigns its quaint 'praise'; this lover of stage plays significantly welcoming a little touch of the artificiality of play to sweeten the intercourse of actual life."

Let me end by remarking that it is significant of the universality—and particularity—of *Elia* that every one thinks that he knows Lamb a little more intimately and appreciates him a little more subtly, than any one else.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Charles Lamb in *Elia*

SONNET TO ELIA

Thou gentle Spirit, sweet and pure and kind,—
Though strangely witted—"high fantastical"—
Who clothest thy deep feelings in a pall
Of motley hues, that twinkle to the mind,
Half hiding, and yet heightening, what's enshrined
Within;—who, by a power unknown to all
Save thee, canst bring up at a call
A thousand seeming opposites, entwined
In wondrous brotherhood—fancy, wild wit,
Quips, cranks, and wiles, with deep sweet thought,
And stinging jests, with honey for the wound;
All blent in intermixture full and fit,—
A banquet for the choicest souls:—Can aught
Repay the solace which from thee I've found!

John Hunter, in *Friendship's Offering*, 1832.

PASSING from the question of literary quality, there are three of the essays of *Elia* which seem to call for intimate consideration by reason of their bearing upon their author's character: "New Year's Eve," written at the end of 1820; "Imperfect Sympathies," written in 1821; and the "Character of the Late Elia," written at the end of 1822, at a time when Lamb had tired of the work and made pretence that Elia was no more. Lamb never wrote a line that does not tell us something of himself—he is one of the most autobiographical authors in English literature, directly and indirectly—but if we would come quickly to know him these three essays are indispensable. I begin with "New Year's Eve":—

"That I am fond of indulging, beyond a hope of sympathy, in such retrospection, may be the symptom of some sickly idiosyncrasy.

Or is it owing to another cause ; simply, that being without wife or family, I have not learned to project myself enough out of myself ; and having no offspring of my own to dally with I turn back upon memory, and adopt my own early idea, as my heir and favourite ? . . .

" I am in love with this green earth ; the face of town and country ; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived ; I, and my friends : to be no younger, no richer, no handsomer. I do not want to be weaned by age ; or drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave.—Any alteration, on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me. My household-gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood. They do not willingly seek Lavinian shores. A new state of being staggers me.

" Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candlelight, and fire-side conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with life ?

" Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him ?

" And you, my midnight darlings, my Folios ! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces ? Must knowledge come to me, if it come at all, by some awkward experiment of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading ?

" Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here,—the recognisable face—the 'sweet assurance of a look——?' "

Much of Lamb is there : his reverence for his early recollections, his comfort in daily life and human intercourse, his love of books, his wistful desire for friendship. Few men with so much imagination and tenderness have had less of the mystic. For him the unknown might remain unknown : he rested on the security of fact. The earth was his best friend, and especially so where it blossomed into a city.

The superficial pessimism and agnosticism of this essay led to protests both public and private, among them a poem of remonstrance by Charles Abraham Elton, in the *London Magazine*, signed " Olen." The poem, which was a long one, reasoned gently but firmly with Elia's unhappy scepticism, it set up a cheerful

Christian certainty in place of Lamb's wistful hesitancies, and finally offered him this picture of the bliss that was, if he only knew it, awaiting him :—

> Thou shalt be human still; and thou shalt be
> (Thine eyes then clear'd with Eden's euphrasy)
> Within the sight and touch of him who told
> The tale our babes now read; Ulysses old
> Ploughing with homeward keel romantic seas;
> Whether, indeed, blind *Melesigenes*
> Greet thee, or bards to whom alike belongs
> That hoar abstraction of Troy's scatter'd songs;
> And thou shalt hail that prophet of his kind,
> *Shakspeare*, the man of multitudinous mind:
> And she, to thee first lovely and first fair,
> Thy *Alice*—she, thy *Alice*, shall be there;
> A woman still, though pure from mortal leaven,
> And warm as love, though blushing all of heaven.

Writing to John Taylor, then editor of the *London*, concerning the consolatory orthodoxy of these verses, Lamb remarked : "Poor Elia . . . does not pretend to so very clear revelations of a future state of being as Olen seems gifted with. He stumbles about dark mountains at best; but he knows at least how to be thankful for this life, and is too thankful indeed for certain relationships lent him here, not to tremble for a possible resumption of the gift. He is too apt to express himself lightly, and cannot be sorry for the present occasion, as it has called forth a reproof so Christianlike." Allsop quotes Coleridge as once saying : "No, no, Lamb's scepticism has not come lightly, nor is he a sceptic. The harsh reproof to Godwin for his contemptuous allusion to Christ before a well-trained child, proves that he is not a sceptic. His mind, never prone to analysis, seems to have been disgusted with the hollow pretences, the false reasonings and absurdities of the rogues and fools with which all establishments, and all creeds seeking to become established, abound. I look upon Lamb as one hovering between earth and heaven; neither hoping much nor fearing anything. It is curious that he should retain many usages which

he learnt or adopted in the fervour of his early religious feelings, now that his faith is in a state of suspended animation. Believe me, who know him well, that Lamb, say what he will, has more of the *essentials* of Christianity than ninety-nine out of a hundred professing Christians. He has all that would still have been Christian had Christ never lived or been made manifest upon earth." [1]

In the "Character of the Late Elia" Lamb thus describes himself:—

"My late friend was in many respects a singular character. Those who did not like him, hated him; and some, who once liked him, afterwards became his bitterest haters. The truth is, he gave himself too little concern what he uttered, and in whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out with what came uppermost. With the severe religionist he would pass for a free-thinker; while the other faction set him down for a bigot, or persuaded themselves that he belied his sentiments. Few understood him; and I am not certain that at all times he quite understood himself. He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches, and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. —He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet, perhaps, not quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. Your long and much talkers hated him. The informal habit of his mind, joined to an inveterate impediment of speech, forbade him to be an orator; and he seemed determined that no one else should play that part when he was present.

"He was *petit* and ordinary in his person and appearance. I have seen him sometimes in what is called good company, but where he has been a stranger, sit silent, and be suspected for an odd fellow; till some unlucky occasion provoking it, he would stutter out some senseless pun (not altogether senseless perhaps, if rightly taken), which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him; but nine times out of ten, he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies. His conceptions rose kindlier than his utterance, and his happiest *impromptus* had the appearance of effort. He has been accused

[1] Crabb Robinson writes, in his *Reminiscences*: "Lamb was a man of '*natural* piety,' and his supposed anti-religious language was in fact directed solely against the dogmatism of systematic theology—he had the spirit of devotion in his heart and the organ of theosophy in his skull."

of trying to be witty, when in truth he was but struggling to give his poor thoughts articulation.

"He chose his companions for some individuality of character which they manifested.—Hence, not many persons of science, and few professed *literati*, were of his councils. They were, for the most part, persons of an uncertain fortune; and, as to such people commonly nothing is more obnoxious than a gentleman of settled (though moderate) income, he passed with most of them for a great miser. To my knowledge this was a mistake. His *intimados*, to confess a truth, were in the world's eye a ragged regiment. He found them floating on the surface of society; and the colour, or something else, in the weed pleased him. The burrs stuck to him—but they were good and loving burrs for all that. He never greatly cared for the society of what are called good people. If any of these were scandalised (and offences were sure to arise), he could not help it. When he has been remonstrated with for not making more concessions to the feelings of good people, he would retort by asking, what one point did these good people ever concede to him?

"He was temperate in his meals and diversions, but always kept a little on this side of abstemiousness. Only in the use of the Indian weed he might be thought a little excessive. He took it, he would say, as a solvent of speech. Marry—as the friendly vapour ascended, how his prattle would curl up sometimes with it! the ligaments, which tongue-tied him, were loosened, and the stammerer proceeded a statist! . . .

"He had a general aversion from being treated like a grave or respectable character, and kept a wary eye upon the advances of age that should so entitle him. He herded always, while it was possible, with people younger than himself. He did not conform to the march of time, but was dragged along in the procession. His manners lagged behind his years. He was too much of the boy-man. The *toga virilis* never sate gracefully on his shoulders. The impressions of infancy had burnt into him, and he resented the impertinence of manhood. These were weaknesses; but such as they were, they are a key to explicate some of his writings."

The case is overstated in some respects, but Lamb is there. Probably he was never hated as he says that he was. The only really hostile verdict upon Lamb is Thomas Carlyle's, quoted on pages 787 and 789, and discounted, I hope, in the mind of every one. Lamb was accompanied ever by a familiar, an unmasker of affectation, a normaliser, a restorer of sanity, who, perched upon his shoulder, prompted him to protest. At a funeral, where there is often a fashion of too much

grief at a necessary process of nature, he laughed; at a musical soirée, where talk has a tendency to become too precious and rapture too vocal, he made puns; at a debate on German philosophy (as we shall see) he sang 'Geuty, Geuty'' ; when hero-worship or foolish pretentiousness was too rank he chanted "Diddle Diddle Dumpkins," or carried a candle for the examination of bumps. He was ever adjusting balances, and was often misunderstood for his pains. Again, Lamb's sympathies were extraordinarily quick, and where sympathies are quick, antipathies are quick too. Aversions are as rapidly generated as preferences; and Lamb had only to suspect the presence of a mind out of tune with his own to be incited straightway to bewilder or irritate it, even although his own character should be blackened in the act. This was sheer mischief. Hatred he felt for no one, except perhaps the Regent, and even for him he would have found extenuating circumstances had he met him. We have seen him telling Robinson that he could never hate any one that he had once seen.

One more extract from *Elia* :—

"There is an order [Lamb wrote, in "Imperfect Sympathies" of imperfect intellects (under which mine must be content to rank which in its constitution is essentially anti-Caledonian. The owners of the sort of faculties I allude to, have minds rather suggestive than comprehensive. They have no pretences to much clearness or precision in their ideas, or in their manner of expressing them Their intellectual wardrobe (to confess fairly) has few whole pieces in it. They are content with fragments and scattered piece of Truth. She presents no full front to them—a feature or side face at the most. Hints and glimpses, germs and crude essays at system, is the utmost they pretend to. They beat up a little gam peradventure—and leave it to knottier heads, more robust constitu tions, to run it down. The light that lights them is not steady an polar, but mutable and shifting: waxing, and again waning. Thei conv ersation is accordingly. They will throw out a random wor in or out of season, and be content to let it pass for what it is worth They cannot speak always as if they were upon their oath—bu must be understood, speaking or writing, with some abatemen They seldom wait to mature a proposition, but e'en bring it t

market in the green ear. They delight to impart their defective discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. They are no systematizers, and would but err more by attempting it. Their minds, as I said before, are suggestive merely." [1]

My object in quoting in this book so much from Lamb's letters and essays has been to let his character unfold itself naturally. I do not want to attempt any formal estimate here ; but I should like to take passages from two at least of his friends supplementing his own remarks. Thomas Hood, who had several points in common with Lamb, supports the "familiar" theory. "As he once owned to me, he was fond of antagonising. Indeed in the sketch of himself, prefacing the last Essays of Elia, . . . he says : 'With the Religionist I pass for a Free-thinker, while the other faction set me down for a Bigot.' In fact, no politician ever laboured more to preserve the Balance of Power in Europe, than he did to correct any temporary preponderances. He was always *trimming* in the nautical, not the political, sense. Thus, in his 'magnanimous letter,' as Hazlitt called it, to High Church Southey, he professed himself a Unitarian. With a Catholic, he would probably have called himself a Jew ; as amongst Quakers, by way of a set-off against their own formality, he would indulge in a little extra levity. I well remember his chuckling at having spirited on his correspondent Bernard Barton to commit some little enormities, such as addressing him as C. Lamb, *Esquire*. . . .

"If he was intolerant of anything, it was of Intolerance. He would have been (if the foundation had existed, save in the fiction of Rabelais), of the Utopian order of Thelemites, where each man under scriptural warrant did what seemed good in his own eyes. He

[1] That was written in 1821. As early as 1799, when he was twenty-four (as Pater recalls), Lamb had told Southey, in a letter, that he "never judged system-wise of things, but fastened upon particulars."

hated evil-speaking, carping, and petty scandal. On one occasion having slipped out an anecdote, to the discredit of a literary man, during a very confidential conversation, the next moment, with an expression of remorse for having impaired even my opinion of the party, he bound me solemnly to bury the story in my own bosom. In another case he characteristically rebuked the backbiting spirit of a censorious neighbour. Some Mrs. Candour telling him, in expectation of an ill-natured comment, that Miss ***, the teacher at the Ladies' School, had married a publican. 'Has she so?' said Lamb, 'then I'll have my beer there!'"

"There was a notion prevalent about Lamb," says De Quincey, "which I can affirm to have been a most erroneous one; it was—that any flagrant act of wickedness formed a recommendation to his favour. 'Ah!' said one man to me, when asking a letter of introduction from him, 'ah! that I could but recommend you as a man that had robbed the mail, or the King's exchequer—which would be better. In that case, I need not add a word; you would take rank instantly amongst the privileged friends of Lamb, without a word from me.' Now, as to '*the King's exchequer*,' I cannot say. A man who should have placed himself in relation with Falstaff, by obeying his commands at a distance of four centuries (like the traveller who demanded of the turnpikeman,—'How do you like your eggs dressed?' and, ten years after, on passing the same gate, received the monosyllabic reply, '*poached!*'), that man might have presented irresistible claims to Lamb's affection. Shakspere, or anything connected with Shakspere, might have proved too much for his Roman virtue. But, putting aside any case so impossible as this, I can affirm that—so far from this being the truth, or approaching the truth—a rule the very opposite governed Lamb's conduct. So far from welcoming wicked, profligate, or dissolute people by preference if they happened to be clever—

he bore with numerous dull people, stupid people, asinine people, for no other reason upon earth than because he knew them, or believed them, to have been ill-used or oppressed by some clever but dissolute man. That was enough."

De Quincey continues: "Perhaps the foundation for the false notion I have mentioned about Lamb's predilections was to be found in his carelessness for those social proscriptions which have sometimes occurred in our stormy times with respect to writers, male and female, who set the dominant notions, or the prevailing feelings of men—(feelings with regard to sexual proprieties, to social distinctions, to the sanctity of property, to the sanctity of religious formulæ, &c., &c.)—at open defiance. Take, for example, Thelwall at one time, Holcroft, Godwin, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, Dr. Priestley, Hazlitt; all of whom were, more or less, in a backward or inverse sense, *tabooed*—that is, consecrated to public hatred and scorn. With respect to all these persons, feeling that the public alienation had gone too far, or had begun originally upon false grounds, Lamb threw his heart and his doors wide open. Politics—what cared he for politics? Religion, in the sense of theological dogmas—what cared he for religion? For religion in its moral aspects, and its relations to the heart of man, no human being ever cared more. With respect to politics, some of his friends could have wished him to hate men when they grew *anti-national*, and in that case only; but he would not. He persisted in liking men who made an idol of Napoleon, who sighed over the dread name of Waterloo, and frowned upon Trafalgar."

With infinite detail and some sorrow De Quincey tells how Lamb refused to share in the national excitement when Blucher visited England in 1814. "One might have thought that, if he manifested no sympathy in a direct shape with the primary cause of the public emotion, still he would have sympathized, in a second-

ary way, with the delirious joy which every street, every alley, then manifested, to the ear as well as to the eye. But no! Still, like Diogenes, he threw upon us all a scoffing air, as of one who stands upon a pedestal of eternity, looking down upon those who share in the transitory feelings of their own age. How he felt in the following year, when the mighty drama was consummated by Waterloo, I cannot say, for I was not then in London: I guess, however, that he would have manifested pretty much the same cynical contempt for us children of the time that he did in all former cases."

Lamb, of course, cared for none of these things, having his own world to live in; nor does he record his feelings on the downfall of Napoleon (so tragic an event to Hazlitt) except in the sentence to Southey, quoted in Chapter XXX: "After all, Bonaparte is a fine fellow, as my barber says, and I should not mind standing bareheaded at his table to do him service in his fall." Lamb had too much sympathy to share in any loud triumph over the defeat of a great man, however dangerous: too much fidelity to the doctrine of live and let live, springing from that toleration which led him always to think of the provocation at the same time as the crime, of the strength of the temptation in conjunction with the weakness of the tempted. He saw man always as a creature of good and evil blended. It was he who said, after one of Hazlitt's lapses from right citizenship, "No, he is not a bad man, but he commits bad actions"—a verdict of singular kindliness and discrimination. Such minds make very poor statesmen but superb recording angels.

Hazlitt, we are told, was inclined to despise Lamb's tolerance as weakness. He wanted all men to take sides and defend them even to the point of bitterness. And Procter, as we have seen, speaks of Lamb's change of manner to suit each guest, not indeed with dis-

approval, but with a suggestion that one manner for all were the finer way. But Hazlitt's criticism argues an incapacity to appreciate the Shakespearian humour of which Lamb was the possessor, the breadth of mind that finds room for all ; while Procter ignóres the fact that Lamb probably considered it his duty as a host to make each person present as happy as might be. But if Procter (as I am sure he did not intend) gives any one the impression that Lamb was wanting in courage, that impression is wrong. Lamb's courage was whole. He was not naturally a fighter ; his tolerance and sympathetic imagination made few things wholly obnoxious to him ; knowing much, he forgave much ; but he never hesitated to speak out when occasion called, as we know from his letters and his published writings. His note on the Jew in the *Dramatic Specimens*, appended to the extract from Marlowe's " Rich Jew of Malta " (see page 355), could have been written only by a fearless man. His epigrams against the Regent were dictated by a fine scorn, careless of risk. His championship of Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt in the " Letter to Southey " (to which we are coming) was a deliberate invitation to unpopularity which few literary men would have put forth. His rebuke of the Unitarians, in an open letter in 1825, for making use of the privileges of the Established Church of which they disapproved, and salving their conscience with an empty protest, was compact of high moral courage and indignation.

But what I think the study of the writings of Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb shows perhaps most noticeably and remarkably, is their extraordinary honesty. They never permitted themselves to deceive. They instantly detected what was genuine both in their fellow creatures and in art, and never wavered in their fidelity to it. They allowed no misunderstandings. Lamb in his best spirits was full of " bams " and roguishness, but when it came to essentials his attitude was firm and

unequivocal. Both he and his sister made up their minds for themselves and allowed nothing to prejudice them. If it were necessary, as Mary Lamb says in a letter on page 350, they would quarrel with any one's brother. Amid the fun and mischief, the tenderness and humour, the eloquence and pathos of the *Elia* essays, one is continually conscious of a mind true to itself and its ideals, an inflexible friend of truth in all things.

CHAPTER XXXVII

1821

Lamb's Golden Year—Sarah Burney's Wedding—An Evening with Charles Mathews—At Margate with the Novellos—Lamb and Mrs. Barbauld—De Quincey at Great Russell Street—Lamb Asleep —"Diddle, Diddle, Dumpkins"—In Praise of Hazlitt—Julius Hare and Lamb.

THE year 1820 saw the Essays of Elia projected, but it was in 1821 that the best of those essays were written. It was Lamb's golden year, containing, among others, "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," "My Relations," "Mackery End in Hertfordshire," "Imperfect Sympathies," "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," "Witches and other Night Fears," "My First Play" and "Dream Children." I would mention also "The Old and the New Schoolmaster" for its very minute revelation of Lamb's curious brain, and for Mary Lamb's contribution to its close. With some of these essays we are already familiar; to others we shall come later.

The first of the few letters of 1821 is to Dorothy Wordsworth, on January 8th, and it refers to the essay on "New Year's Eve": "I am glad you liked my new year's speculations. Everybody likes them, except the Author of the Pleasures of Hope.[1] Disappointment attend him! How I like to be liked, and *what I do* to be liked! They flatter me in magazines, newspapers, and all the minor reviews. The Quarterlies hold aloof. But they must come into it in time, or their leaves be waste paper."

[1] Lamb does not mean that Campbell did not like them. He merely refers jestingly to their hopelessness.

Crabb Robinson again helps us :—

"January 20th, 1821 :—I read to him [Flaxman] while he was drawing, Lamb on New Year's Day—an article I ought not to have read to him, for the literary merit could not destroy the impression produced by so *un*religious an effusion.

"February 21st :—I took these [Raphael's Planets, engraved by Dorigny] to Lamb . . . but L. did not seem heartily to enjoy them. On the contrary, taking them to Aders', they were delighted with them. On the other hand, bringing back to Lamb the Bible of Raphael, L., and also Hazlitt, who was there, agreed in declaring these to be among the finest works of Raphael. H. and I now speak again, but he does not omit the *Sir* when he talks to me.

"March 3rd :—Another morning of calls. The only one interesting on Miss Lamb. C. L. seems to have felt acutely poor Scott's death. [John Scott, editor of the *London Magazine*.] Talfourd was thinking of applying for the editorship but C. L. agreed with me in thinking it incompatible with his profession. . . . I spent the evening at Lamb's, chiefly playing picquet with Miss L. while C. L. read."

In April of this year the quiet routine of Mary Lamb's life was broken by the excitement of a wedding, when Sarah Burney, the daughter of Rear-Admiral Burney, was married to her cousin John Payne. Lamb described the event very charmingly in an essay which was not, however, printed until four years had passed. Whether he really gave away the bride, or only affected to have done so, I cannot say. "I do not know [he wrote] when I have been better pleased than at being invited last week to be present at the wedding of a friend's daughter. I like to make one at these ceremonies, which to us old people give back our youth in a manner, and restore our gayest season, in the remembrance of our own success, or the regrets, scarcely less tender, of our own youthful disappointments, in this point

of a settlement. On these occasions I am sure to be in good-humour for a week or two after, and enjoy a reflected honey-moon. Being without a family, I am flattered with these temporary adoptions into a friend's family; I feel a sort of cousinhood, or uncleship, for the season; I am inducted into degrees of affinity; and, in the participated socialities of the little community, I lay down for a brief while my solitary bachelorship. I carry this humour so far, that I take it unkindly to be left out, even when a funeral is going on in the house of a dear friend. . . .

"I do not know what business I have to be present in solemn places. I cannot divest me of an unseasonable disposition to levity upon the most awful occasions. I was never cut out for a public functionary. Ceremony and I have long shaken hands; but I could not resist the importunities of the young lady's father, whose gout unhappily confined him at home, to act as parent on this occasion, and *give away the bride*. Something ludicrous occurred to me at this most serious of all moments—a sense of my unfitness to have the disposal, even in imagination, of the sweet young creature beside me. I fear I was betrayed to some lightness, for the awful eye of the parson—and the rector's eye of Saint Mildred's in the Poultry is no trifle of a rebuke—was upon me in an instant, souring my incipient jest to the tristful severities of a funeral.

"This was the only misbehaviour which I can plead to upon this solemn occasion, unless what was objected to me after the ceremony by one of the handsome Miss T——'s, be accounted a solecism. She was pleased to say that she had never seen a gentleman before me give away a bride in black. Now black has been my ordinary apparel so long—indeed I take it to be the proper costume of an author—the stage sanctions it—that to have appeared in some lighter colour would have raised more mirth at my expense, than the anomaly had created censure. But I could perceive

that the bride's mother, and some elderly ladies present (God bless them !) would have been well content, if I had come in any other colour than that. But I got over the omen by a lucky apologue, which I remembered out of Pilpay, or some Indian author, of all the birds being invited to the linnets' wedding, at which, when all the rest came in their gayest feathers, the raven alone apologised for his cloak because 'he had no other.' . . .

"My friend the admiral was in fine wig and buckle on this occasion—a striking contrast to his usual neglect of personal appearance. He did not once shove up his borrowed locks (his custom ever at his morning studies) to betray the few grey stragglers of his own beneath them. He wore an aspect of thoughtful satisfaction. I trembled for the hour, which at length approached, when after a protracted *breakfast* of three hours—if stores of cold fowls, tongues, hams, botargoes, dried fruits, wines, cordials, &c., can deserve so meagre an appellation—the coach was announced, which was come to carry off the bride and bridegroom for a season, as custom has sensibly ordained, into the country. . . . In this crisis, betwixt tarrying and departure, I must do justice to a foolish talent of mine, which had otherwise like to have brought me into disgrace in the forepart of the day ; I mean a power, in any emergency, of thinking and giving vent to all manner of strange nonsense. In this awkward dilemma I found it sovereign. I rattled off some of my most excellent absurdities. All were willing to be relieved, at any expense of reason, from the pressure of the intolerable vacuum which had succeeded to the morning bustle. By this means I was fortunate in keeping together the better part of the company to a late hour : and a rubber of whist (the Admiral's favourite game) with some rare strokes of chance as well as skill, which came opportunely on his side—lengthened out till midnight—dismissed the old gentleman at last to his bed with comparatively

easy spirits." As we shall see, the Admiral lived only until the following November.

In May the *London Magazine* printed the essay on "The Old and the New Schoolmaster," which, though not one of the richest of the series, is yet at the beginning so autobiographical that I must quote a little from it :—

I have no astronomy. I do not know where to look for the Bear, or Charles's Wain ; the place of any star ; or the name of any of them at sight. I guess at Venus only by her brightness—and if the sun on some portentous morn were to make his first appearance in the West, I verily believe, that, while all the world were gasping in apprehension about me, I alone should stand unterrified, from sheer incuriosity and want of observation. Of history and chronology I possess some vague points, such as one cannot help picking up in the course of miscellaneous study ; but I never deliberately sat down to a chronicle, even of my own country. I have most dim apprehensions of the four great monarchies ; and sometimes the Assyrian, sometimes the Persian, floats as *first* in my fancy. I make the widest conjectures concerning Egypt, and her shepherd kings. My friend *M.*, with great painstaking, got me to think I understood the first proposition in Euclid, but gave me over in despair at the second. I am entirely unacquainted with the modern languages ; and, like a better man than myself, have "small Latin and less Greek." I am a stranger to the shapes and texture of the commonest trees, herbs, flowers—not from the circumstance of my being town-born—for I should have brought the same inobservant spirit into the world with me, had I first seen it in "on Devon's leafy shores,"—and am no less at a loss among purely town-objects, tools, engines, mechanic processes.—Not that I affect ignorance—but my head has not many mansions, nor spacious ; and I have been obliged to fill it with such cabinet curiosities as it can hold without aching. I sometimes wonder, how I have passed my probation with so little discredit in the world, as I have done, upon so meagre a stock. But the fact is, a man may do very well with a very little knowledge, and scarce be found out, in mixed company ; every body is so much more ready to produce his own, than to call for a display of your acquisitions. But in a *tête-à-tête* there is no shuffling. The truth will out. There is nothing which I dread so much, as the being left alone for a quarter of an hour with a sensible, well-informed man, that does not know me.

Lamb was not exaggerating. Nothing was probably more surprising to the average man than the things that Lamb did not know—except the things that he did.

On May 1st we have a note to Coleridge in reply to

an invitation from the Gillmans at Highgate, to meet Charles Mathews the actor. The dinner, which was on Friday, May 4th, was not quite so successful as had been hoped, or so we gather from the account of it in the memoir of Mathews by Mrs. Mathews, who, by the way, was a half-sister of Fanny Kelly. "Mr. Lamb's first approach was not prepossessing. His figure was small and mean; and no man certainly was ever less beholden to his tailor. His 'bran' new suit of black cloth (in which he affected several times during the day to take great pride and to cherish as a novelty that he had long looked for and wanted) was drolly contrasted with his very rusty silk stockings, shown from his knees, and his much too large *thick* shoes, without polish. His shirt rejoiced in a wide ill-plaited frill, and his very small, tight, white neckcloth was hemmed to a fine point at the ends that formed part of the little bow. His hair was black and sleek, but not formal, and his face the gravest I ever saw, but indicating great intellect and resembling very much the portraits of King Charles I. Mr. Coleridge was very anxious about his *pet* Lamb's first impression upon my husband, which I believe his friend saw; and guessing that he had been extolled he mischievously resolved to thwart his panegyrist, disappoint the strangers, and altogether to upset the suspected plan of showing him off."

In June the Lambs were at Margate, where they received a visit from Charles Cowden Clarke, then living at Ramsgate, and some of the Novellos. Mrs. Cowden Clarke records, in *Recollections of Writers*: "It was while we were at Ramsgate that I remember hearing of Charles Lamb and his sister being at Margate for a 'sea change,' and I went over to see them. It seems as if it were but yesterday that I noted his eager way of telling me about an extaordinary large whale that had been captured there, of its having created lively interest in the place, of its having been conveyed away

in a strong cart, on which it lay a huge mass of colossal height ; when he added with one of his sudden droll penetrating glances : the *eye* has just gone past our window."

I quote from Crabb Robinson again :—

" July 7th, 1821 :—Dined hastily in Coleman Street, and then went to Mrs. Barbauld's, where I was soon joined by Mr. and Miss Lamb. This was a meeting I had brought about to gratify mutual curiosity. The Lambs are pleased with Mrs. Barbauld, and therefore it is probable they have pleased her. Mrs. C. Aikin was there, and Miss Laurence. Lamb was chatty, and suited his conversation to his company, except that, speaking of Gilbert Wakefield, he said he had a peevish face. When he was told Mrs. Aikin was Gilbert Wakefield's daughter, he was vexed, but got out of the scrape tolerably well." Mrs. Barbauld was then seventy-eight and was living at Stoke Newington. The Lambs walked back with Robinson to Covent Garden.

" July 20th, 1821 :—Took tea and spent evening at Lamb's. Hazlitt there—little or no conversation between us. His fondness for his child (tho' it is a troubling and forward child) is a good feature in his character. We played whist and I staid late." Robinson then left London for the usual Circuit, duly followed by a long holiday, and we have therefore no more news of the Lambs until August 14th, when Lamb invited Ayrton to whist in this laconic note: "A rubber to-morrow evening at 8. Closed windows on account of the demise of her Majesty."

In October, we know from Allsop, Mary Lamb was taken ill again, and on the 26th of that month came a sad blow—the death of John Lamb ; but before saying more of that I should like to complete the record of 1821. We can then examine James Elia, as his brother called him, at our leisure, at full length. I might merely add here the following passage from a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Crabb Robinson on November 24th, 1821 :

"It gave us great concern to hear of the death of John Lamb. Though his brother and sister did not see very much of him, the loss will be deeply felt; pray tell us particularly how they are; and give our kind love to them. I fear Charles's pen will be stopped for a time. What delightful papers he has lately written for that otherwise abominable magazine! The old King's Benchers is exquisite—indeed the only one I do not quite like is the Grace before Meat."

Another loss to the Lambs' circle came with the death of Captain, or rather Rear-Admiral, Burney, in November; which was in no way lightened by the difficulties in which Martin Burney found himself. Crabb Robinson's *Diary* has this entry: "Nov. 26th [1821]:—I called late on Lamb. I was sorry to learn that poor Burney has left his family unprovided for, and he spoke of Martin as very ill off in *every way*. This I have since learned referred to M. B.'s having some time back made a most foolish marriage. This had led to other misfortunes. Rickman had first turned him out of his situation under him and ultimately reduced his income. Miss L. has taken Mrs. M. B. under her protection." In a letter from Mary Lamb to Mrs. Ayrton we see her busily at work in her efforts to amend the position of her old friend, to whom she must always have stood very much in the relation of a mother. It states that she has seen Mr. and Mrs. Rickman, and that Martin Burney was coming that day to frame a suitable letter to Rickman, with Charles Lamb's help. There are other signs in Crabb Robinson's *Diary* that poor Burney never prospered.

Writing to Rickman on November 20th, 1821, Lamb says that Admiral Burney's death would have been a greater shock to him but for the deaths of Jem White, and his brother John Lamb, which had somewhat "inured" him.

Before leaving 1821, I should like to refer to an

evening at Great Russell Street during the year, which is described for us by De Quincey—partly in his "London Reminiscences," 1838, and partly in a review of Talfourd's biography in the *North British Review* for November, 1848. I quote from the later source: "There were no strangers; Charles Lamb, his sister, and myself made up the party. Even this was done in kindness. They knew that I should have been oppressed by an effort such as must be made in the society of strangers; and they placed me by their own fireside, where I could say as little or as much as I pleased.

"We dined about five o'clock, and it was one of the hospitalities inevitable to the Lambs, that any game which they might receive from rural friends in the course of the week, was reserved for the day of a friend's dining with them.

"In regard to wine, Lamb and myself had the same habit—perhaps it rose to the dignity of a principle—viz., to take a great deal *during* dinner—none *after* it. Consequently, as Miss Lamb (who drank only water) retired almost with the dinner itself, nothing remained for men of our principles, the rigour of which we had illustrated by taking rather too much of old port before the cloth was drawn, except talking; amœbæan colloquy, or, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, a dialogue of 'brisk reciprocation.' But this was impossible: over Lamb, at this period of his life, there passed regularly, after taking wine, a brief eclipse of sleep. It descended upon him as softly as a shadow. In a gross person, laden with superfluous flesh, and sleeping heavily, this would have been disagreeable; but in Lamb, thin even to meagreness, spare and wiry as an Arab of the desert, or as Thomas Aquinas wasted by scholastic vigils, the affection of sleep seemed rather a network of aerial gossamer than of earthy cobweb—more like a golden haze falling upon him gently from the heavens than a cloud exhaling upwards from the flesh. Motionless in his chair as a bust, breathing so gently as scarcely

to seem certainly alive, he presented the image of repose midway between life and death, like the repose of sculpture ; and to one who knew his history a repose affectingly contrasting with the calamities and internal storms of his life. I have heard more persons than I can now distinctly recall, observe of Lamb when sleeping that his countenance in that state assumed an expression almost seraphic, from its intellectual beauty of outline, its childlike simplicity, and its benignity. It could not be called a transfiguration that sleep had worked in his face ; for the features wore essentially the same expression when waking ; but sleep spiritualized that expression, exalted it, and also harmonized it. Much of the change lay in that last process. The eyes it was that disturbed the unity of effect in Lamb's waking face. They gave a restlessness to the character of his intellect, shifting, like Northern Lights, through every mode of combination with fantastic playfulness, and sometimes by fiery gleams obliterating for the moment that pure light of benignity which was the predominant reading on his features." [1]

[1] De Quincey's account continues thus : " On awaking from his brief slumber, Lamb sat for some time in profound silence, and then, with the most startling rapidity, sang out—' Diddle, diddle, dumpkins ' ; not looking at me, but as if soliloquizing. For five minutes he relapsed into the same deep silence ; from which again he started up into the same abrupt utterance of—' Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.' I could not help laughing aloud at the extreme energy of this sudden communication, contrasted with the deep silence that went before and followed. Lamb smilingly begged to know what I was laughing at, and with a look of as much surprise as if it were I that had done something unaccountable, and not himself. I told him (as was the truth) that there had suddenly occurred to me the possibility of my being in some future period or other called on to give an account of this very evening before some literary committee. The committee might say to me—(supposing the case that I outlived him)—' You dined with Mr. Lamb in January, 1822 ; now, can you remember any remark or memorable observation which that celebrated man made before or after dinner ? '

" I as *Respondent.* ' Oh yes, I can.'

" *Com.* ' What was it ? '

" *Resp.* Diddle, diddle, dumpkins.'

The "London Reminiscences" tell us that Lamb's old habit of chaffing De Quincey was by no means abandoned. A grudging remark of De Quincey's as to Hazlitt's capacity not satisfying Lamb, he spared no pains to make his dissatisfaction known. "'I know not,' he said, 'where you have been so lucky as to find finer thinkers than Hazlitt; for my part, I know of none such. You live, I think, or have lived, in Grasmere. Well, I was once there. I was at Kes-

"*Com.* 'And was this his only observation? Did Mr. Lamb not strengthen this remark by some other of the same nature?'

"*Resp.* 'Yes, he did.'

"*Com.* 'And what was it?'

"*Resp.* 'Diddle, diddle, dumpkin.'

"*Com.* 'What is your secret opinion of Dumpkins? Do you conceive Dumpkins to have been a thing or a person?'

"*Resp.* 'I conceive Dumpkins to have been a person, having the rights of a person.'

"*Com.* 'Capable, for instance, of suing and being sued?'

"*Resp.* 'Yes, capable of both; though I have reason to think there would have been very little use in suing Dumpkins.'

"*Com.* 'How so? Are the Committee to understand that you, the Respondent, in your own case have found it a vain speculation, countenanced only by visionary lawyers, to sue Dumpkins?'

"*Resp.* 'No; I never lost a shilling by Dumpkins, the reason for which may be that Dumpkins never owed me a shilling; but from his *prænomen* of "diddle" I apprehend that he was too well acquainted with joint-stock companies.'

"*Com.* 'And your opinion is, that he may have diddled Mr. Lamb?'

"*Resp.* 'I conceive it to be not unlikely.'

"*Com.* 'And, perhaps, from Mr. Lamb's pathetic reiteration of his name, "Diddle, diddle," you would be disposed to infer that Dumpkins had practised his diddling talents upon Mr. L. more than once?'

"*Resp.* 'I think it probable.'

"Lamb laughed, and brightened up; tea was announced; Miss Lamb returned. The cloud had passed away from Lamb's spirits, and again he realized the pleasure of evening, which, in *his* apprehension, was so essential to the pleasure of literature.

"On the table lay a copy of Wordsworth, in two volumes; it was the edition of Longman, printed about the time of Waterloo. Wordsworth was held in little consideration, I believe, amongst the house of Longman: at any rate, *their* editions of his works were got up in the most slovenly manner. In particular, the table

wick, and all over that wild country; yet none such could I find there. But, stay, there are the caves in your neighbourhood, as well as the lakes; these we did not visit. No, Mary,' turning to his sister, 'you know we didn't visit the caves. So, perhaps, these great men live there. Oh! yes, doubtless, they live in the caves of Westmorland. But you must allow for us poor Londoners. Hazlitt serves for *our* purposes. And in this poor, little, inconsiderable place of London, he is one of our very prime thinkers. But certainly I ought to have made an exception in behalf of the philosophers in the caves.' And thus he ran on, until it was difficult [De Quincey says] to know whether to understand him in jest or earnest." It

of contents was drawn up like a short-hand bill of parcels. By accident the book lay open at a part of this table, where the sonnet beginning—

'Alas! what boots the long laborious quest'—

had been entered with mercantile speed, as—

'Alas! what boots,——'

"'Yes,' said Lamb, reading this entry in a dolorous tone of voice, 'he may well say *that*. I paid Hoby three guineas for a pair that tore like blotting paper, when I was leaping a ditch to escape a farmer that pursued me with a pitch-fork for trespassing. But why should W. wear boots in Westmorland? Pray, advise him to patronize shoes.'"

Here I might perhaps add another story of Lamb's freakishness from an article in the *British Quarterly Review* for May, 1848:—"Gentle he undoubtedly was; and a gentle spirit lends its grace to all his writings. But there was also a whimsical recklessness which would occasionally beset him. To give an instance: He dined one day at the house of a friend of ours, and on entering the drawing-room after dinner, saw a gentleman standing in the middle of the room whose bent shoulders, in schoolboy leapfrog phrase, 'made a back'; the temptation was too great for Lamb, he placed his hands on the unconscious victim and flew over his head, to the astonished indignation of many and amusement of the few. This perhaps may be called a mere disregard to the proprieties of time and place; but Lamb was at times less excusably aggressive."

was on this occasion that Lamb read to De Quincey Thurlow's sonnet on the heron and his own verses "The Three Graves."

A letter from Daniel Macmillan, the publisher, to the Rev. S. Watt, printed in Thomas Hughes's *Memoir of Daniel Macmillan*, 1882, gives another glimpse of Lamb and De Quincey, at what I imagine to have been a *London Magazine* dinner about the same time: "He [Julius Hare] spoke in the most affectionate manner of Charles Lamb. He dined with him and a large party of literati once. De Quincey was there. I daresay you know that De Q. is a very little man. Hare was sitting next to Lamb; De Q. was on the opposite side of the table. Lamb touched Hare, and said, quite loud, so that the whole table might hear him, 'Do you see that little man?' (pointing to De Q.), 'Well, though he is so little, he has written a thing about Macbeth better than anything I could write;—no—not better than anything I could write, but I could not write anything better.' [Referring to the *London Magazine* essay on "The Knocking on the Gate in 'Macbeth.'"] Immediately afterwards he said to Hare, 'I am a very foolish fellow. For instance I have taken a fancy for you. I wish you would come and sup with me to-morrow night, I will give you a crab—perhaps lobster.' Hare says that two glasses of wine made him quite light—not tipsy, but elevated—so that the stories about his drunkenness, and the things he says of himself, are not to be trusted."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

John Lamb

LITTLE is known of Charles Lamb's brother John beyond the references in the early letters and a passage or so in Crabb Robinson's *Diary* (not much in his favour, except as coming from an inflexibly prejudiced critic of manners); but happily we have the whimsical yet sufficient character sketch of James Elia in the essay "My Relations," together with, to add a tender grace, the memories of John Lamb's boyhood in "Dream Children." To these materials I have been able to add a little, nothing essential or novel, but serving somewhat to amplify and fortify Charles Lamb's description.

John Lamb was born on June 5th, 1763, eighteen months before Mary Lamb and eleven and a half years before Charles. To Charles he was always the elder brother, even to the end, as the sonnet published in 1818 tells us :—

> John, you were figuring in the gay career
> Of blooming manhood with a young man's joy,
> When I was yet a little peevish boy—
> Though time has made the difference disappear
> Betwixt our ages, which *then* seemed so great—
> And still by rightful custom you retain
> Much of the old authoritative strain,
> And keep the elder brother up in state.
> O! you do well in this. 'Tis man's worst deed
> To let the "things that have been" run to waste,
> And in the unmeaning present sink the past:
> In whose dim glass even now I faintly read
> Old buried forms, and faces long ago,
> Which you, and I, and one more, only know.

One critic at any rate has seen conscious irony in these

lines; but I doubt if that were Lamb's intention. It was not in his nature to pillory a brother's selfishness in public.

This sonnet was not John Lamb's first appearance in a published poem. In the *Poetical Pieces on Several Occasions* by John Lamb senior, printed in the first edition of this book, will be found a little versified "Letter from a child to his Grandmother," in which John Lamb the less is supposed to address his grandam —Mrs. Field, I imagine, whose favourite, Charles Lamb tells us, John always was. The lines run :—

Dear Grandmam,
Pray to God to bless
Your grandson dear with happiness;
. . . . . .
That as I do advance each year,
I may be taught my God to fear,
My little frame, from passion free,
To man's estate, from infancy;
From vice that leads a youth aside,
And to have wisdom for my guide,
That I may neither lie, nor swear,
But in the path of virtue steer,
My actions gen'rous, fair, and just,
Be always true unto my trust;
And then the Lord will ever bless
Your grandson dear,
John L——b the Less.

Where John Lamb went to school we do not know (possibly he too had instruction from Mr. William Bird), but that he was well read and a man of some culture we may feel confident. Samuel Salt was probably his sponsor at the South-Sea House, which we may suppose him to have entered in the early 1780's. It was just before the tragedy of 1796 that a stone fell on his foot and injured it seriously. In "Dream Children" Lamb speaks of the leg as having been amputated, but in his letters he remarks that Cruikshanks, the surgeon, hoped to save it. There is no other mention of John Lamb having lost the limb,

the impression conveyed by "My Relations" being that physically he was abundantly sound and active. Lamb may have thrown the amputation into "Dream Children" in accordance with his love of mystification and to save his character as a matter-of-lie man.

In 1796 John Lamb was thirty-three years of age; a comfortable bachelor in a good position, with opinions crystallised. The tragedy of September, as we have seen, put his character to the test, and found it wanting: Chapter IX shows us how differently the man of thirty-three and his youthful brother of twenty-one viewed the responsibility thus suddenly thrown upon them. From that moment John Lamb settled down into a career independent of his family, and, though friendly relations were maintained, he seems to have remained independent to the end. Where he at first lived I do not discover, but in or about 1805, on succeeding John Tipp as Accountant of the South-Sea House, he took up his residence in a "fine suite of official rooms in Threadneedle Street" (to use his brother's words), and there he dwelt, I imagine, until his death; although I have seen it stated that, like his brother, he was pensioned off.

At this point comes fittingly Lamb's classic description of John Lamb, under the name of Cousin James Elia, in "My Relations," written in the spring of 1821. —"James is an inexplicable cousin. Nature hath her unities, which not every critic can penetrate; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them. The pen of Yorick, and of none since his, could have drawn J. E. entire—those fine Shandian lights and shades, which make up his story. I must limp after in my poor antithetical manner, as the fates have given me grace and talent. J. E. then—to the eye of a common observer at least—seemeth made up of contradictory principles.—The genuine child of impulse, the frigid philosopher of prudence—the phlegm of my cousin's doctrine is invariably at war with his temperament, which is high

sanguine. With always some fire-new project in his brain, J. E. is the systematic opponent of innovation, and crier down of every thing that has not stood the test of age and experiment. With a hundred fine notions chasing one another hourly in his fancy, he is startled at the least approach to the romantic in others; and, determined by his own sense in every thing, commends *you* to the guidance of common sense on all occasions.—With a touch of the eccentric in all which he does, or says, he is only anxious that *you* should not commit yourself by doing any thing absurd or singular. On my once letting slip at table, that I was not fond of a certain popular dish, he begged me at any rate not to *say* so—for the world would think me mad. He disguises a passionate fondness for works of high art (whereof he hath amassed a choice collection), under the pretext of buying only to sell again—that his enthusiasm may give no encouragement to yours. Yet, if it were so, why does that piece of tender, pastoral Dominichino hang still by his wall?—is the ball of his sight much more dear to him?—or what picture-dealer can talk like him?

"Whereas mankind in general are observed to warp their speculative conclusions to the bent of their individual humours, *his* theories are sure to be in diametrical opposition to his constitution. He is courageous as Charles of Sweden, upon instinct; chary of his person, upon principle, as a travelling Quaker.—He has been preaching up to me, all my life, the doctrine of bowing to the great—the necessity of forms, and manner, to a man's getting on in the world. He himself never aims at either, that I can discover,—and has a spirit, that would stand upright in the presence of the Cham of Tartary. It is pleasant to hear him discourse of patience—extolling it as the truest wisdom—and to see him during the last seven minutes that his dinner is getting ready. Nature never ran up in her haste a more restless piece of workmanship than when she

moulded this impetuous cousin—and Art never turned out a more elaborate orator than he can display himself to be, upon his favourite topic of the advantages of quiet, and contentedness in the state, whatever it may be, that we are placed in. He is triumphant on this theme, when he has you safe in one of those short stages that ply for the western road, in a very obstructing manner, at the foot of John Murray's street—where you get in when it is empty, and are expected to wait till the vehicle hath completed her just freight—a trying three quarters of an hour to some people. He wonders at your fidgetiness,—'where could we be better than we are, *thus sitting, thus consulting?*'—'prefers, for his part, a state of rest to locomotion,'—with an eye all the while upon the coachman—till at length, waxing out of all patience, at *your want of it*, he breaks out into a pathetic remonstrance at the fellow for detaining us so long over the time which he had professed, and declares peremptorily, that 'the gentleman in the coach is determined to get out, if he does not drive on that instant.'

"Very quick at inventing an argument, or detecting a sophistry, he is incapable of attending *you* in any chain of arguing. Indeed he makes wild work with logic; and seems to jump at most admirable conclusions by some process, not at all akin to it. Consonantly enough to this, he hath been heard to deny, upon certain occasions, that there exists such a faculty at all in man as *reason*; and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it—enforcing his negation with all the might of *reasoning* he is master of. He has some speculative notions against laughter, and will maintain that laughing is not natural to *him*—when peradventure the next moment his lungs shall crow like Chanticleer. He says some of the best things in the world—and declareth that wit is his aversion. It was he who said, upon seeing the Eton boys at play in their grounds—*What a pity to think, that these fine*

ingenuous lads in a few years will all be changed into frivolous Members of Parliament!

"His youth was fiery, glowing, tempestuous—and in age he discovereth no symptom of cooling. This is that which I admire in him. I hate people who meet Time half-way. I am for no compromise with that inevitable spoiler. While he lives, J. E. will take his swing.—It does me good, as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation, on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face, that indicates some purchase in his eye—a Claude—or a Hobbema—for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's, and Phillips's—or where not, to pick up pictures, and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his time occupied with business which he *must do*—assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands—wishes he had fewer holidays—and goes off—Westward Ho!—chanting a tune, to Pall Mall—perfectly convinced that he has convinced me—while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless.

"It is pleasant again to see this Professor of Indifference doing the honours of his new purchase, when he has fairly housed it. You must view it in every light, till *he* has found the best—placing it at this distance, and at that, but always suiting the focus of your sight to his own. You must spy at it through your fingers, to catch the aërial perspective—though you assure him that to you the landscape shows much more agreeable without that artifice. Wo be to the luckless wight, who does not only not respond to his rapture, but who should drop an unseasonable intimation of preferring one of his anterior bargains to the present!—The last is always his best hit—his 'Cynthia of the minute.'—Alas! how many a mild Madonna have I known to *come in*—a Raphael!—keep its ascendancy for a few

brief moons—then, after certain intermedial degradations, from the front drawing-room to the back gallery, thence to the dark parlour,—adopted in turn by each of the Caracci, under successive lowering ascriptions of filiation, mildly breaking its fall—consigned to the oblivious lumber-room, *go out* at last a Luca Giordano, or plain Carlo Maratti !—which things when I beheld—musing upon the chances and mutabilities of fate below, hath made me to reflect upon the altered condition of great personages, or that woful Queen of Richard the Second—

> ——set forth in pomp,
> She came adorned hither like sweet May.
> Sent back like Hollowmass or shortest day.

" With great love for *you*, J. E. hath but a limited sympathy with what you feel or do. He lives in a world of his own, and makes slender guesses at what passes in your mind. He never pierces the marrow of your habits. He will tell an old established playgoer, that Mr. Such-a-one, of So-and-so (naming one of the theatres), is a very lively comedian—as a piece of news ! He advertised me but the other day of some pleasant green lanes which he had found out for me, *knowing me to be a great walker*, in my own immediate vicinity—who have haunted the identical spot any time these twenty years !—He has not much respect for that class of feelings which goes by the name of sentimental. He applies the definition of real evil to bodily sufferings exclusively—and rejecteth all others as imaginary. He is affected by the sight, or the bare supposition, of a creature in pain, to a degree which I have never witnessed out of womankind. A constitutional acuteness to this class of sufferings may in part account for this. The animal tribe in particular he taketh under his especial protection. A broken-winded or spur-galled horse is sure to find an advocate in him. An over-loaded ass is his client for ever. He is the apostle to the brute kind—the never-failing friend of

those who have none to care for them. The contemplation of a lobster boiled, or eels skinned *alive*, will wring him so, that 'all for pity he could die.' It will take the savour from his palate, and the rest from his pillow, for days and nights. With the intense feeling of Thomas Clarkson, he wanted only the steadiness of pursuit, and unity of purpose, of that 'true yoke-fellow with Time,' to have effected as much for the *Animal*, as *he* hath done for the *Negro Creation*. But my uncontrollable cousin is but imperfectly formed for purposes which demand co-operation. He cannot wait. His amelioration-plans must be ripened in a day. For this reason he has cut but an equivocal figure in benevolent societies, and combinations for the alleviation of human sufferings. His zeal constantly makes him to outrun, and put out, his coadjutors. He thinks of relieving,—while they think of debating. He was black-balled out of a society for the Relief of * * * * * * * * * *, because the fervor of his humanity toiled beyond the formal apprehension, and creeping processes, of his associates. I shall always consider this distinction as a patent of nobility in the Elia family!

"Do I mention these seeming inconsistencies to smile at, or upbraid, my unique cousin? Marry, heaven, anld all good manners, and the understanding that shoud be between kinsfolk, forbid!—With all the strangenesses of this *strangest of the Elias*—I would not have him in one jot or tittle other than he is; neither would I barter or exchange my wild kinsman for the most exact, regular, and every way consistent kinsman breathing."

To add anything essential to this masterly full length is impossible; but a few passages from other sources may be brought together to stand beside it. Talfourd speaks of "the broad, burly, jovial bulk of John Lamb, the Ajax Telamon of the slender clerks of the old South-Sea House, whom he sometimes introduces to the

rooms of his younger brother, surprised to learn from them that he is growing famous." Elsewhere again, Talfourd calls him "John Lamb the jovial and burly, who dared to argue with Hazlitt on questions of Art," a reminder that their argument on the colours of Holbein and Vandyke once reached such a height of feeling that John Lamb knocked Hazlitt down. Crabb Robinson tells us that Coleridge when he heard of the assault expressed "no displeasure." The quarrel had no serious results; we have it on the authority of Tom Moore, who had it from James Kenney, that when Hazlitt rose he remarked philosophically that he would forgive the injury; "I am a metaphysician and do not mind a blow; nothing but an *idea* hurts me."

Crabb Robinson's other references to John Lamb are uniformly hostile. Thus, after calling on Charles one evening, he records emphatically, "I found Lamb's brother there, and played whist with him and Martin Burney and Miss L. John L. is so grossly rude and vulgar so that I am resolved never to play with him again." And again: "Dec. 27th, Wednesday, 1820:—Took tea at Lamb's. One of his monthly parties; less agreeable than usual. His vulgar brother there, whose manners are intolerable." We may, however, safely assume that John Lamb was quick enough to detect hostility in the Diarist, and that accordingly in his company he emphasised some of its habitual freedoms of behaviour; just as Charles Lamb, when Coleridge would have shown him off to the Mathews' at Highgate, sank perversely beneath his true level. And probably no sweetness or refinement on John Lamb's part would have wrung commendation of him from Crabb Robinson. These things are temperamental. Robinson remained inimical to the end; writing of the news of John Lamb's death, in 1821, he says he shall regret it "only if it embarrasses" Charles.

Of John Lamb's pictures one only is now known—

he portrait of Milton which he bought in 1815. This vas left, with his other property, to his brother Charles. Charles sold all but the Milton, which he gave as a lowry to Emma Isola, his adopted daughter, on her narriage with Edward Moxon. The original is now n America, in the New York Public Library, but a reproduction will be found in Vol. VI of my edition of Lamb.

In the character sketch of James Elia nothing is said of his literary efforts; but his brother's letters tell us of two of his compositions. Writing to Robert Lloyd, in 1809, Lamb mentions that the little poem "The Beggar-man," in the *Poetry for Children*, was by John.

THE BEGGAR-MAN

Abject, stooping, old and wan,
See yon wretched beggar man;
Once a father's hopeful heir,
Once a mother's tender care.
When too young to understand
He but scorch'd his little hand,
By the candle's flaming light
Attracted, dancing, spiral, bright,
Clasping fond her darling round,
A thousand kisses heal'd the wound.
Now abject, stooping, old, and wan,
No mother tends the beggar man.

Then nought too good for him to wear,
With cherub face and flaxen hair,
In fancy's choicest gauds array'd,
Cap of lace with rose to aid,
Milk-white hat and feather blue,
Shoes of red, and coral too
With silver bells to please his ear,
And charm the frequent ready tear.
Now abject, stooping, old, and wan,
Neglected is the beggar man.

See the boy advance in age,
And learning spreads her useful page;
In vain! for giddy pleasure calls,
And shews the marbles, tops, and balls.

What's learning to the charms of play ?
The indulgent tutor must give way.
A heedless wilful dunce, and wild,
The parents' fondness spoil'd the child ;
The youth in vagrant courses ran ;
Now abject, stooping, old, and wan,
Their fondling is the beggar man.

No man writes only one poem, and John Lamb certainly wrote others ; but the remainder of his verses are lost. We are, however, richer in his prose. In 1810 Lamb wrote to Crabb Robinson (whose animus against John Lamb had not then ripened) asking him to get reviewed a pamphlet on cruelty to animals, by John Lamb. " My Brother, whom you have met at my rooms (a plump, good-looking man of seven-and-forty) has written a book about humanity, which I transmit to you herewith. . . . Don't show it to Mrs. Collier, for I remember she makes excellent *Eel* soup, and the leading points of the Book are directed against that very process." The pamphlet was entitled *A Letter to the Right Hon. William Windham, on his opposition to Lord Erskine's Bill for the prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, 1810, following, in a precisely similar form, the pamphlet containing Mr. Windham's speech, which had been issued in the same year by another publisher. The Bill before the house had been framed by Lord Erskine, then Lord Chancellor, and was first read on May 15th, 1809 ; it passed the Lords, but was thrown out by the Commons by 37 to 27. Mr. Windham, ex-Secretary for War, in a speech that was both temperate and entirely in agreement with the motive of the Bill, opposed it as treating of a subject unfit for legislation ; his contention being that the law-makers had more pressing matter to deal with, and that such abuses righted themselves. John Lamb, however, fell upon him with vigour.

Here is the passage—one tremendous sentence—on eels : " If an eel had the wisdom of Solomon, he could not help himself in the ill-usage that befalls him ; but

if he had, and were told, that it was necessary for our subsistence that he should be eaten, that he must be skinned first, and then broiled; if ignorant of man's usual practice, he would conclude that the cook would so far use her reason as to cut off his head first, which is not fit for food, as then he might be skinned and broiled without harm; for however the other parts of his body might be convulsed during the culinary operations, there could be no feeling of consciousness therein, the communication with the brain being cut off; but if the woman were immediately to stick a fork into his eye, skin him alive, coil him up in a skewer, head and all, so that in the extremest agony he could not move, and forthwith broil him to death: then were the same Almighty Power that formed man from the dust, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, to call the eel into a new existence, with a knowledge of the treatment he had undergone, and he found that the instinctive disposition which man has in common with other carnivorous animals, which inclines him to cruelty, was not the sole cause of his torments; but that men did not attend to consider whether the sufferings of such insignificant creatures could be lessened: that eels were not the only sufferers; that lobsters and other shell fish were put into cold water and boiled to death by slow degrees in many parts of the sea coast; that these, and many other such wanton atrocities, were the consequence of carelessness occasioned by the pride of mankind despising their low estate, and of the general opinion that there is no punishable sin in the ill-treatment of animals designed for our use; that, therefore, the woman did not bestow so much thought on him as to cut his head off first, and that she would have laughed at any considerate person who should have desired such a thing; with what fearful indignation might he inveigh against the unfeeling metaphysician that, like a cruel spirit alarmed at the appearance of a dawning of mercy upon animals,

could not rest satisfied with opposing the Cruelty Prevention Bill by the plea of possible inconvenience to mankind, highly magnified and emblazoned, but had set forth to the vulgar and unthinking of all ranks, in the jargon of proud learning, that man's obligations of morality towards the creatures subjected to his use are imperfect obligations!"

A Commonplace Book [1] belonging to Lamb has led to the discovery of some further polemics by the fiery James Elia. Pasted into that volume is a letter upon the Corn Laws, of 1815, signed J. L., cut from the *Examiner* of November 22nd, 1818. J. L. was undoubtedly John Lamb, and, after his brother's character sketch and his remarks on fried eels, to find him defending the poor against the Government, is no surprise. Like Charles Lamb, John Lamb was always on the side of the oppressed, but the two brothers used different weapons; Charles bringing sweet reasonableness and humorous irony to his task, John brandishing a club.

The first communication (for on searching in the *Examiner* for the extracts in the album, I came upon others from the same vigorous pen), printed on November 9th, 1818, begins thus: "Sir, I am happy in having been brought up an humble but sincere follower of the Nazarene:[2] I love to consider Christ as my Redeemer, and would not give up my belief in him for the choicest gifts of fortune. When a child, I have had my feelings so affected by his sufferings, that I never can give up his dying for me upon the dreadful cross."

The writer then plunges into his attack upon the Law, by which the importation of foreign corn (when

[1] Described in Appendix II. to the original edition of this *Life of Charles Lamb*.

[2] It is interesting to recollect that Charles Lamb's poem "The Grandame," printed in 1796, 1797 and 1818 (see page 42), ends with the line:—

"And was a follower of the Nazarene."

the price was below 80s. a quarter) was forbidden. Here is a passage : " To remedy all this, we have, first, that delicious preparation, be it food or beverage, which, in the hour of insolence, our people used to laugh at the French for lapping up so savourily, called soup maigre. Then next, Paternoster-row teems with religious trash, or tracts, as the earth just now with mushrooms ; but the people have not yet got into good Master Lintot's way of eating suppositories for radishes. In this we perceive a strong smack of the old Pharisee. The distributing of Bibles just now seems so ill-timed ; for, in the forcible words of Hooker, ' destitution, until it is removed, suffereth not the mind of man to admit of any other care.'

" But after all, as a master stroke of policy, commend me to their taking up every interval of the Sabbath, ordained to be a day of rest even for our cattle, however little we regard them, in *schooling* the early careworn, unkempt little wretches of children : Do they think knowledge and a full sense of their misery will make them happy under it ? Is it not a mockery of God for them to be made to say, ' Give us this day our daily bread ' ? When they can read the gospel for themselves, will they not read with emphasis the woe-denouncing judgments of Jesus Christ, hanging over the heads of the canting hypocrites who are starving them ?

" Thank God, we have a New Parliament :—' Sha't see thy other daughter will use thee kindly.' *King Lear*."

The spirit is very fine—a kind of more opulent Cobbett. We see too that, like his brother, John Lamb went to good intellects for his examples—to the Bible, to Shakespeare, to Hooker, and, elsewhere in the letter, to Rabelais.

It was J. L.'s second letter that Charles Lamb pasted into his book : a good choice, as always with him. It has this charming description of gleaning, a privilege

which the legislators had threatened : " However, allow me, Mr. Editor, to send a sigh after the nicest word in the language, which must now grow obsolete ; the very language of our books is unsuitable to the harshness of the time. The word Glean has ever been a favourite word with poets and authors ; it presented instantly to one's mind summer and sunshine and charity, love, virtue, and happiness, the brightest flowers in civilized society ; it pictured man satisfied with having secured himself from want, looking on pleased that his less fortunate fellow-creatures, who, like the fowls of the air, gather not into barns, should have a taste of the bounty of Heaven at this holiday time of the year ; but the reality is gone.

" The prettiest story we have extant of the early people of the earth arose out of the more ancient privilege of Gleaning. I can scarcely remember now without tears Boaz and Ruth, the filial piety of the lovely girl and all the pastoral innocence and beautiful simplicity of this interesting tale. The charm is gone. Ruth, Lavinia and Brisina, were robbers." That passage might almost have been written by Charles Lamb himself, although it is in a vein that he did not begin to cultivate until nearly two years later.

On November 29th " A Constant Reader " wrote to the *Examiner* to point out where J. L. was wrong. J. L. lost no time in replying, concluding a long letter with this footnote concerning the friend of the Law : " They were foreseen by Agur the son of Jaketh, and I treat your readers with the fine oriental language of his prophecy :—' There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth.—The horse-leach hath two daughters crying, Give, Give !—There are three things that are never satisfied, yea four things say not, It is enough :—The grave and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire, that saith not, It is enough.' " Throughout the letter

J. L. had assumed his opponent to be a mealman and therefore an interested party. In the reply the "Constant Reader" denied that he was a mealman, adding, "I will however compliment him [J. L.] by following his example so far, as to inform *him* what I imagine him to be, viz. from his canting and Scripture-quoting method of writing, I consider him to be a *Methodist Preacher*, accustomed both to whine and denounce with hypocritical solemnity; he is probably too a follower of the Spitalfields Orator."

There ceased the correspondence (in so far as it was published), not perhaps important in itself, but serving as an interesting gloss upon "My Relations." Of John Lamb's literary exercises I hope some day to learn more. It is impossible that so ardent a philanthropist should have written only these letters, the "Beggar Man" and the Humanity pamphlet.

John Lamb, after many years of confident bachelorhood, married a widow, a Mrs. Isaac Dowden, with one or more children. He died on October 26th, 1821, aged fifty-eight. His will, dated July 14th, 1821, leaves everything to his sole executor, his brother Charles Lamb of the East India House, from which we may assume that his widow had a separate income of her own. The will was sworn to by John Stoddart, and Philip Fennings of the Custom House.

Charles Lamb felt John's death keenly. Writing to Wordsworth in March, 1822, he speaks of a deadness to everything which he thinks may date from his brother's loss. His grief, however, found some expression almost instantly in the essay "Dream Children," perhaps the most beautiful of all his writings, which was printed in the *London Magazine* for January, 1822. It is John Lamb's best title to fame that he should have inspired that exquisite poem in prose; and the essay is proof too that Charles, for all John's faults of selfishness and assertiveness, loved him. There is unmistakable love behind such a passage as

this—love, and pride with it: "Then in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us, and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the country in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody. . . ."

CHAPTER XXXIX

1822

Lamb and the Man of the World—Coleridge's Invisible Genius—Coleridge and the Pig—India House Shackles—The *London Magazine* becomes Irksome—The Lambs in France—An Evening with Talma—Mary Lamb's Illness—Crabb Robinson in Paris—Thomas Hood—Bernard Barton—Lamb's Sonnet on Work—Barton's Sonnet to Elia—Godwin in Difficulties—Lamb and Sir Walter Scott—Godwin's Last Days.

THE year 1822 was also a busy one, producing the "Dissertation on Roast Pig," the papers on the Old Actors, and the "Praise of Chimney Sweepers"; but Lamb's finest work (as it seems to me) was done—1821 was passed. Beautiful and unexcelled things he was yet to write, such as "Blakesmoor in H——shire," "Old China," the Fallacies on Rising with the Lark and Retiring with the Lamb; but he was flagging, the first flush of excitement was over, and he had done in a short space of time a vast deal for so diffident a workman. When it is remembered that these essays were spun entirely from his own memory and fancy in the intervals of office routine, the harvest of the three years 1820 to 1822 becomes the more remarkable.

We find him in February of this year in some "Extracts from the Portfolio of a Man of the World," printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December, 1846. Who the man of the world was I do not know, but he certainly had the gift of bringing away from good intellects no more than he carried to them. Here is his impression of Lamb:—

"Feb. 18th, 1822:—In company with Charles Lamb. I did not like him—something very poor about his whole conversation—an affected quietness and small

humour, just what is natural in a man living in a narrow circle in a city."

Two days later the observer had the ill fortune to waste an evening at Gillman's, listening to Coleridge: "Feb. 20th, 1822:—G—— took me to see and hear Coleridge. I was sadly disappointed in his appearance—a fat vulgar face, nothing sublime or transcendental about him. I looked for the light of genius which had exercised such influence on his age, but I could not find it." An account is then given of Coleridge's monologue on the interview between Hector and Andromache in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, until it was interrupted by the "entrance of some mess which is his supper."

Lamb's first letter of 1822—on March 9th—is to Coleridge, who had in error thanked him for a sucking-pig which another had sent. It contains the germ of the essay on roast pig, which Lamb must straightway have written. In the letter he says: "To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away. Teals, widgeons, snipes, barn-door fowl, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self extended; but pardon me if I stop somewhere—where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity—there my friends (or any good man) may command me: but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift."

From the letter to Wordsworth of March 20th I must quote largely: "We are pretty well save colds and rheumatics, and a certain deadness to every thing, which I think I may date from poor John's Loss, and

another accident or two at the same time, that has made me almost bury myself at Dalston, where yet I see more faces than I could wish. Deaths over-set one and put one out long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within this last two twelvem^{ths}., and so many parts of me have been numbed. One sees a picture, reads an anecdote, starts a casual fancy, and thinks to tell of it to this person in preference to every other—the person is gone whom it would have peculiarly suited. It won't do for *another*. Every departure destroys a class of sympathies. There's Capt. Burney gone !—what fun has whist now ? what matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you ? One never hears any thing, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence. Thus one distributes oneself about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious. It takes so much from them as there was a common link. A. B. and C. make a party. A. dies. B. not only loses A. but all A.'s part in C. C. loses A.'s part in B., and so the alphabet sickens by subtraction of interchangeables.

" I express myself muddily, capite dolente. I have a dulling cold. My theory is to enjoy life, but the practice is against it. I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls without relief day after day, all the golden hours of the day between 10 and 4 without ease or interposition. Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum, these pestilential clerk faces always in one's dish. O for a few years between the grave and the

desk ! they are the same, save that at the latter you are outside the machine. The foul enchanter—letters four do form his name—Busirane is his name in hell—that has curtailed you of some domestic comforts, hath laid a heavier hand on me, not in present infliction, but in taking away the hope of enfranchisement.[1] I dare not whisper to myself a Pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry. Otium cum indignitate. I had thought in a green old age (O green thought !) to have retired to Ponder's End—emblematic name how beautiful ! in the Ware road, there to have made up my accounts with Heaven and the Company, toddling about between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching on some fine Izaac Walton morning to Hoddesdon or Amwell, careless as a Beggar, but walking, walking ever, till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking !

" The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing) with my breast against this thorn of a Desk, with the only hope that some Pulmonary affliction may relieve me. Vide Lord Palmerston's report of the Clerks in the war office (Debates, this morning's Times) by which it appears in 20 years, as many Clerks have been coughd and catarrhd out of it into their freer graves." Here we see Lamb beginning to think seriously of leaving the East India House. He had now been there just thirty years.

The letter continues : " You have gratifyd me with liking my meeting with Dodd. For the Malvolio story—the thing is become in verity a sad task and I eke it out with any thing. If I could slip out of it I sh[d]. be happy, but our chief reputed assistants have forsaken us. The opium eater crossed us once with a

[1] The foul enchanter was Joseph Hume, who had attacked Vansittart's scheme for the reduction of pension charges and had made the affairs of the East India Company a subject of special scrutiny. Incidentally he had revised the system of collecting the revenue, thus touching Wordsworth as Distributor of Stamps.

dazzling path, and hath as suddenly left us darkling ; and in short I shall go on from dull to worse, because I cannot resist the Bookseller's importunity—the old plea you know of authors, but I believe on my part sincere." Lamb refers to his first paper on the Old Actors in the *London Magazine* for February, 1822. From this point, as he says, his interest in *Elia* declined.

Crabb Robinson has little of the Lambs to record for the early part of 1822. This is the first entry of any importance : " June 17th :—To call on the Lambs and take leave, they setting out for France next morning. I gave Miss Lamb a letter for Miss Williams, to whom I sent a copy of *Mrs. Leicester's School.* The Lambs have a Frenchman as their companion, and Miss Lamb's nurse, in case she should be ill. Lamb was in high spirits ; his sister rather nervous. Her courage in going is great."

This brings us to Lamb's great enterprise of seeing Paris, which we know he had cherished as long ago as 1802. The way had been made easy by James Kenney, the dramatist, who was now living at Versailles, where the Lambs were to stay part of the time. The Frenchman who accompanied them was, I think, named Guichy. The party travelled viâ Dieppe, sailing from Brighton.

Writing to Canon Ainger in 1881, about the Lambs, Mrs. Jane Tween, the daughter of Randal Norris, said that one reason of the visit to France was the desire of Charles and Mary Lamb to get an idea of the French language as it was spoken, with a view to helping Emma Isola in that tongue. " Miss Lamb with her indefatigable perseverance overcame the difficulty and brought to their joint assistance the complete conjugation of the verbs, affirmatively, negatively, interrogatively and negatively - interrogatively." Mrs. Tween wrote at a time removed by nearly sixty years from the visit to France, and her memory may have deceived her. If, however, Charles and Mary Lamb

had such an end in view, in addition to the ordinary curiosity of travellers, it would have been very like them.

Lamb has left little record of the impression made upon him by the French people or by Paris. Indeed, he never refers to them in his essays ; but in a letter to John Clare soon after his return, he wrote : " Since I saw you I have been in France, and have eaten frogs. The nicest little rabbity things you ever tasted. Do look about for them. Make Mrs. Clare pick off the hind quarters, boil them plain, with parsley and butter. The fore quarters are not so good. She may let them hop off by themselves." Patmore tells us that Lamb, whose conversational French was of the most meagre, wishing once to order an egg, bade the waiter bring what sounded like " eau-de-vie." The waiter acted on the supposition, so much to Lamb's satisfaction that he cultivated the error. The late John Hollingshead, the great-nephew of Miss Sarah James, Mary Lamb's nurse in those days, relates on the authority of his aunt that " in Paris Lamb led his own independent life—disappearing sometimes all day, having lived mostly on the river quays on the Odéon side of the Seine, rummaging the bookstalls and print-shops for old book and old prints, returning late at night to the hotel, and skating up the waxed stairs to bed, thoroughly satisfied with his day's work."

At the Hotel de l'Europe (now rebuilt, in the Rue de Valois, just to the east of the Palais Royal) Lamb supped with Talma, the tragedian, and saw the famous " Bellows " portrait of Shakespeare, now known to be an imposture, but so cleverly managed as to deceive Shakespeare's best critic. Talma, who was then acting in Regulus, wished for Lamb's opinion of the performance ; but Lamb (says Kenney, in a little account printed in Henry Angelo's *Pic Nic*) replied nothing but merely smiled. " ' Ah ! ' said Talma, ' I was not very happy to-night ; you must see me in *Sylla*.'—' Incidit

in Scyllam,' said Lamb, ' qui vult vitare Charybdim.'—' Ah ! you are a rogue ; you are a great rogue,' said Talma, shaking him cordially by the hand, as they parted."

In a letter to Barron Field in September Lamb refers to Paris again : " Paris is a glorious picturesque old City. London looks mean and New to it, as the town of Washington would, seen after *it*. But they have no St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey. The Seine, so much despised by Cockneys, is exactly the size to run thro' a magnificent street ; palaces a mile long on one side, lofty Edinbro' stone (O the glorious antiques !) : houses on the other. The Thames disunites London & Southwark."

Lamb and his sister were to have come home together, but Mary was taken ill—in a diligence, according to Moore—and had to remain behind under the care of Miss James, while her brother returned to his office. A letter from Mary Shelley, the poet's widow, to Leigh Hunt in Italy, a year or so later, contains an interesting glimpse of the household at Versailles and tells a little more about the visit : " I was pleased to see the Kenneys, especially Kenney, since he is much, dear Hunt, in your circle, and I asked him, accordingly, a number of questions. They have an immense family, and a little house quite full—and in the midst of a horde of uninteresting beings, one graceful and amiable creature, Louisa Holcroft, the eldest of Holcroft's girls by Mrs. Kenney : she is now, I suppose, about two and twenty ; she attends to the whole family, and her gentleness and sweetness seems the spirit to set all right. I like to see her and Kenney together, they appear so affectionately attached. You would like to see them, too ; very pretty, with bright eyes and animated but unaffected and simple manners, her blushes cover her cheeks whenever she speaks, or whenever mamma is going to tell an unlucky story, which she has vainly endeavoured to interrupt with,

'Oh, mamma, not *that*.' . . . Two years ago the Lambs made an excursion to France. When at Amiens, poor Miss L. was taken ill in her usual way, and Lamb was in despair. He met, however, with some acquaintances, who got Miss L. into proper hands, and L. came on to Versailles, and stayed with the Kenneys, going on very well, if the French wine had not been too good for him. . . . Kenney was loud in her [Mary Lamb's] praise, saying that he thought her a faultless creature —possessing every virtue under heaven."

Fortunately Mary Lamb's attack was brief, and Crabb Robinson appearing on the scene, she was enabled to enjoy Paris thoroughly. He writes: "August 18th, 1822:—Miss Lamb has begged me to give her a day or two. She comes to Paris this evening, and stays here a week. Her only male friend is a Mr. Payne, the author of 'Brutus,' whom she praises exceedingly for his kindness and attentions to Charles. He has a good face." Mr. Payne was John Howard Payne, an American actor and dramatist, known to fame as the author of "Home, Sweet Home," with whom Lamb had a brief correspondence in the months following the French visit. John Poole, the dramatist (whose farce, "Paul Pry," it seems more than probable, grew from Lamb's essay "Tom Pry"), seems also to have met Lamb in Paris.

Crabb Robinson continues: "August 19th:—I then called on Mrs. Kenney and Miss Lamb, who were just arrived at the Hotel de l'Europe, Rue Valois, and I accompanied them through the Palais Royal to the new Restaurations near Tortoni's, and took ice with them. Miss L. was very comfortable indeed.

"August 20th:—I went to Mrs. Kenney and Miss L. with whom I spent the rest of the day. The first accompanied me to Mrs. Aders and we then walked to the Louvre. . . . Miss L. enjoyed the galleries. . . .

"August 21st:—Miss L. was as much amused by these singularities [Rag Fair and the Rotunda] as by

the splendid objects so generally run after. . . . When Charles went back to England he left a note for his sister's direction. After pointing out a few pictures in the Louvre, he proceeds : ' Then you must walk all along the Borough side of the Seine facing the Tuileries. There is a mile and a half of print shops and book stalls. If the latter were but English. Then there is a place where the Paris people put all their dead people, and bring 'em flowers and dolls and gingerbread nuts and sonnets and such trifles. And that is all I think worth seeing as sights, except that the streets and shops of Paris are themselves the best sight.' I had not seen this letter [Robinson continues] when I took a walk that precisely corresponds with Lamb's taste, all of whose likings I can always sympathise with, but not generally with his dislikings." Writing to Mrs. Kenney at the end of this year Mary Lamb says, " Oh the dear long dreary boulevards ! "

On September 11th Lamb writes to Mrs. Kenney to say that Mary has reached home safely, but failed to smuggle in Crabb Robinson's waistcoat. " They could not comprehend how a waistcoat, marked Henry Robinson, could be a part of Miss Lamb's wearing apparel." Lamb adds a charming little note to Mrs. Kenney's daughter Sophy, whom he calls his dear wife : " the few short days of connubial felicity which I passed with you among the pears and apricots of Versailles were some of the happiest of my life."

We now come to two new friends of greater magnitude, both of whom Lamb met through the *London Magazine* —Thomas Hood and Bernard Barton. Hood, who was then twenty-three, having just given up engraving for literature, had been called in to assist Taylor in editing the magazine when, in the summer of 1821, it passed out of the hands of Baldwin and his partners. Many years after, in the " Literary Reminiscences " in *Hood's Own*, 1839, from which I have already quoted, he described very gracefully and sympathetically his

intercourse with Lamb, whom he admired almost to adoration. Lamb had as kindly a feeling for Hood as for any of the younger writers, while his talent amazed him. "That half Hogarth," he once called him.

Here is Hood's account of his first sight of Elia: "I was sitting one morning beside our Editor, busily correcting proofs, when a visitor was announced, whose name, grumbled by a low ventriloquial voice, like Tom Pipes calling from the hold through the hatchway, did not resound distinctly on my tympanum. However, the door opened, and in came a stranger,—a figure remarkable at a glance, with a fine head, on a small spare body, supported by two almost immaterial legs. He was clothed in sables, of a by-gone fashion, but there was something wanting, or something present about him, that certified he was neither a divine, nor a physician, nor a schoolmaster: from a certain neatness and sobriety in his dress, coupled with his sedate bearing, he might have been taken, but that such a costume would be anomalous, for a *Quaker* in black. He looked still more like (what he really was) a literary Modern Antique, a New-Old author, a living Anachronism, contemporary at once with Burton the Elder and Colman the Younger. Meanwhile he advanced with rather peculiar gait, his walk was plantigrade, and with a cheerful 'How d'ye,' and one of the blandest, sweetest smiles that ever brightened a manly countenance, held out two fingers to the Editor.

"The two gentlemen in black soon fell into discourse; and whilst they conferred, the Lavater principle within me, set to work upon the interesting specimen thus presented to its speculations. It was a striking intellectual face, full of wiry lines, physiognomical quips and cranks, that gave it great character. There was much earnestness about the brows, and a deal of speculation in the eyes, which were brown and bright, and 'quick in turning'; the nose, a decided one, though

of no established order; and there was a handsome smartness about the mouth. Altogether it was no common face—none of those *willow-pattern* ones, which Nature turns out by thousands at her potteries;—but more like a chance specimen of the Chinese ware, one to the set—unique, antique, quaint. No one who had once seen it, could pretend not to know it again. It was no face to lend its countenance to any confusion of persons in a Comedy of Errors. You might have sworn to it piecemeal,—a separate affidavit for every feature. In short his face was as original as his figure; his figure as his character; his character as his writings; his writings the most original of the age. After the literary business had been settled, the Editor invited his contributor to dinner, adding 'we shall have a hare——' 'And—and—and—and many Friends!'"

Lamb, Hood adds, "was shy like myself with strangers, so that, despite my yearnings, our first meeting scarcely amounted to an introduction. We were both at dinner, amongst the hare's many friends, but our acquaintance got no farther, in spite of a desperate attempt on my part to attract his notice. His complaint of the Decay of Beggars presented another chance: I wrote on coarse paper, and in ragged English, a letter of thanks to him as if from one of his mendicant clients, but it produced no effect. I had given up all hope, when one night, sitting sick and sad, in my bedroom, racked with the rheumatism, the door was suddenly opened, the well-known quaint figure in black walked in without any formality, and with a cheerful 'Well, boy, how are you?' and the bland sweet smile extended the two figures. They were eagerly clutched of course, and from that hour we were firm friends."

The first of Lamb's letters to Bernard Barton, all of which, with two exceptions, are now preserved in the British Museum, is dated September 11th, 1822. Barton and Lamb had met probably at a *London Magazine*

dinner, where Lamb had made a joke about the inconsistency of Quakers trifling with anything as vain as poetry; Barton had taken it seriously and had since written to protest. Hence Lamb's first letter, in reply, and the beginning of a very valuable correspondence. In the course of the letter Lamb says: "I am very tired of clerking it, but have no remedy. Did you see a sonnet to this purpose in the *Examiner*?—

> "*Who* first invented Work—and tied the free
> And holy-day rejoycing spirit down
> To the ever-haunting importunity
> Of business, in the green fields, and the town—
> To plough—loom—anvil—spade—&, oh, most sad,
> To this dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood?
> Who but the Being Unblest, alien from good,
> Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
> Task ever plies 'mid rotatory burnings,
> That round and round incalculably reel—
> For wrath Divine hath made him like a wheel—
> In that red realm from whence are no returnings;
> Where toiling and turmoiling ever and aye
> He, and his Thoughts, keep pensive worky-day."

The sonnet was, of course, Lamb's own. Writing again in October he continues the subject: "I sincerely sympathise with you on your doleful confinement. Of Time, Health, and Riches, the first in order is not last in excellence. Riches are chiefly good, because they give us Time. What a weight of wearisome prison hours have [I] to look back and forward to, as quite cut out [of] life—and the sting of the thing is, that for six hours every day I have no business which I could not contract into two, if they would let me work Task-work." And again, in December, "I like a hit at our way of life, tho' it does well for me, better than anything short of *all one's time to one's self*, for which alone I rankle with envy at the rich. Books are good, and Pictures are good, and Money to buy them therefore good, but to buy *TIME*! in other words, LIFE—" But in January, 1823, when Barton seemed likely to allow his weariness of desk-work to cause him to revolt,

Lamb, as we shall see, praised the routine and kept him to it.

Bernard Barton was a Quaker, a clerk in a Quaker bank at Woodbridge, in Suffolk. He was thirty-eight years of age (by nine years Lamb's junior, although one perhaps thinks of him as being his senior); was a steady contributor of devotional verse to the *London Magazine* and the Annuals; and was already the author of four volumes—the latest, *Napoleon, and Other Poems*, just published. Lamb was not destined to write to Barton as he had written to Manning in the old days: he was always a little cautious, since misapprehensions were possible; but the Barton correspondence is full of fine things and quiet humour. The Quaker poet's sonnet "To Elia," printed in the *London Magazine* for February, 1823, is an excellent specimen of his lighter non-devotional verse, and is good criticism too:—

> Delightful Author!—unto whom I owe
> Moments and moods of fancy and of feeling
> Afresh to grateful Memory now appealing,
> Fain would I "bless thee—ere I let thee go!"
> From month to month has the exhaustless flow
> Of thy original mind, its wealth revealing,
> With quaintest humour, and deep pathos healing
> The World's rude wounds, revived Life's early glow:
> And, mixt with this, at times, to earnest thought
> Glimpses of truth, most simple and sublime,
> By thy imagination have been brought
> Over my spirit. From the olden time
> Of authorship thy patent should be dated,
> And thou with Marvell, Browne, and Burton, mated.

In October we find Lamb writing to Haydon to ask for help for Godwin—not monetary help, for poor Haydon was never in a position to supply that, but the interest of Haydon's friends or patrons, particularly Mrs. Coutts (Harriot Mellon, the actress, who had played in "Mr. H.") and Sir Walter Scott. Godwin was in very low water, as foreshadowed by an entry in Crabb Robinson's *Diary* in the previous June:

"Godwin also called. He related to me his late law suits, which ended in his being turned out of his house. He has lived some years without paying any rent, availing himself of points of law which rendered it difficult for any person to make a title. The complacency with which he was content to profit by this has lessened him in my opinion. However he suffers now by being obliged to go into a new house. He has a large arrear of rent to discharge and the costs of action to pay, and he has been in great distress. Lamb has lent him £50. I could not refuse him £30. I doubt whether I shall ever be repaid."

Lamb took Godwin's case very seriously, and was tireless in his efforts to rehabilitate him. His letter to Scott, sealed with a seal borrowed from Barron Field, elicited a donation, which was to be anonymous, of £10. Lamb in his reply said: "I cannot pass over your kind expressions as to myself. It is not likely that I shall ever find myself in Scotland, but should the event ever happen, I should be proud to pay my respects to you in your own land. My disparagement of heaths and highlands—if I said any such thing in half earnest,—you must put down as a piece of the old Vulpine policy. I must make the most of the spot I am chained to, and console myself for my flat destiny as well as I am able. I know very well our mole-hills are not mountains, but I must cocker them up and make them look as big and as handsome as I can, that we may both be satisfied. Allow me to express the pleasure I feel on an occasion given me of writing to you." In this letter Lamb seems to be replying to one in which Scott invited him to Scotland; Andrew Lang discovered that Scott had sent him an invitation as early as 1818.

Lamb and Scott met once at breakfast at Haydon's in 1821, and Procter describes the meeting in his *Autobiographical Fragment*. Lamb did not care for the Waverley novels (which he persuaded Dyer were written

by Lord Castlereagh) although he pronounced *Kenilworth* a good "story"; but he admired their author, and Talfourd has an agreeable anecdote of his pleasure when a stranger in the street pointed out to him the Wizard of the North.

To return to Godwin, a fund was raised for his benefit in the following year, chiefly by Lamb's efforts, the signatories to the appeal, for £600, being Crabb Robinson, £30; William Ayrton, £10; John Murray, £10 10s.; Charles Lamb, £50 (the conversion of the loan into a gift); the Hon. W. Lamb, afterwards Lord Melbourne, £20; Lord Francis Leveson Gower, £10; Lord Dudley, £50; Sir James Mackintosh, £10. Byron gave £26 5s., Alsager £10, and "A. B. C. [*i.e.*, Sir Walter Scott], by Charles Lamb," £10. The Godwins moved to the Strand, where the philosopher worked on his *History of the Commonwealth*. In 1833 he received the post of Yeoman Usher of the Exchequer, which he held till his death in 1836, although its duties had vanished.

CHAPTER XL

1823

Contemporary Opinion of Lamb—A Letter of Thanks for a Pig—Byron's "Vision of Judgment"—Good Sense to Barton—Sara Coleridge at Highgate—Lamb and the Pudding—Monkhouse's Famous Dinners—Lamb and Tom Moore—Mary Lamb's Handwriting—Enter John Bates Dibdin—The Lambs at Hastings—A Church for the Pocket—Lamb and the Bathing Men—The "Letter to Southey"—Christopher North's Chaff—Southey's Fine Reply—The Reconciliation—The Move to Colebrooke Cottage—A Last Glimpse of the Covent Garden Rooms—George Daniel's Recollections of Lamb—Robert Bloomfield—Lamb Makes His Will—George Dyer's Immersion—Lamb at the Mansion House.

THE year 1823 was important for at least three reasons: *Elia*, Lamb's best-known book, was published; he left London for Islington; and he wrote the "Letter to Southey." The chief essays of 1823, which were afterwards collected in the *Last Essays of Elia* in 1833, were "Old China," "Poor Relations," "The Old Margate Hoy" and "Amicus Redivivus."

From Sir Richard Phillips' *Public Characters of all Nations*, which was published in this year, we may learn how Lamb was at that time considered:—

"Mr. Charles Lamb is a native of London, and was educated at Christ's Hospital. He has for some years held a situation in the Accomptant-general's office at the India-house. Mr. Lamb early in life was exceedingly intimate with Southey, Coleridge, and Lloyd. He is now connected with the London Magazine, to which he has contributed various articles of great originality. Though he cannot, perhaps, be classed among men of eminent genius, he is undoubtedly very far above mediocrity, whether we consider him as a poet, an essayist, or a critic. . . . [His works are then enumerated.]

The sister of Mr. Lamb, an amiable and intelligent woman, has published some works for youth." [1]

One of the first letters of 1823 is to Wordsworth, accompanying a gift of *Elia*. Lamb writes: "There is nothing in my pages which a Lady may not read aloud without indecorum, *which is more than can be said of Shakspeare*. What a nut this last sentence would be for Blackwood!"—referring to *Blackwood's* attacks on the Cockney School of Literature. Another early and delightful letter is to Mr. and Mrs. Collier who, like several of the readers of the "Dissertation on Roast Pig," had sent its author an offering from the sty.

"Twelfth Day [January 6], 1823.

"The pig was above my feeble praise. It was a dear pigmy. There was some contention as to who should have the ears, but in spite of his obstinacy

[1] Another public reference to Lamb may also be mentioned here, by way of indicating how certain of his contemporaries looked at the man who set out to write for antiquity. The critic in question does not of course really count, but his point of view is not perhaps uninteresting. In *The Press; or, Literary Chit Chat, A Satire*, published in 1822, by, I believe, one James Harley, most of the writers of the day are brought under review by the three persons of the dialogue. Lamb comes in after a reference to the "Lakish poets," who "seem to woo the quiz." Lloyd is referred to, and then:—

Pocus
Also Lambe
Whom Covent Garden once contrived to damn.

Hocus
His Farce you mean: 'tis better than the mass
Of flitting dramas that before us pass.
His tales are so affected in their style
That oft, in lieu of tears, they cause a smile.

Later there is a prose note to this passage:—

"Lambe is also a pleasing writer, but egregiously affected. His 'Mr. H.' possesses excellencies as a farce, that induce me to wish its author would devote himself to such a species of writing, instead of mawkish tales, or such vapid and thoroughly ridiculous articles as most of those 'Elia' writes in the London Magazine."

(deaf as these little creatures are to advice) I contrived to get at one of them.

"It came in boots too, which I took as a favor. Generally those petty toes, pretty toes! are missing. But I suppose he wore them, to look taller.

"He must have been the least of his race. His little foots would have gone into the silver slipper. I take him to have been Chinese, and a female.—

"If Evelyn could have seen him, he would never have farrowed two such prodigious volumes, seeing how much good can be contained in—how small a compass!

"He crackled delicately.

"John Collier Jun^r. has sent me a Poem which (without the smallest bias from the aforesaid present, believe me) I pronounce *sterling*.[1]

"I set about Evelyn, and finished the first volume in the course of a natural day. Today I attack the second.—Parts are very interesting.—

"I left a blank at top of my letter, not being determined *which* to address it to, so Farmer and Farmer's wife will please to divide our thanks. May your granaries be full, and your rats empty, and your chickens plump, and your envious neighbors lean, and your labourers busy, and you as idle and as happy as the day is long!

"Vive l' Agriculture!

"Frank Field's marriage of course you have seen in the papers, and that his brother Barron is expected home.

"How do you make your pigs so little?
They are vastly engaging at that age.
I was so myself.
Now I am a disagreeable old hog—
A middle-aged-gentleman-and-a-half.

[1] "A Poet's Pilgrimage."

My faculties thank God are not much impaired. I have my sight, hearing, taste, pretty perfect; and can read the Lord's Prayer in the common type, by the help of a candle, without making many mistakes.

"Believe me, while my faculties last, a proper appreciator of your many kindnesses in this way; and that the last lingering relish of past flavors upon my dying memory will be the smack of that little Ear. It was the left ear, which is lucky. Many happy returns (not of the Pig) but of the New Year to both.—

"Mary for her share of the Pig and the memoirs desires to send the same—

"Dr. Mr. C. and Mrs. C.—

"Yours truly

"C. Lamb."

On January 8th Crabb Robinson has this entry: "Went in the evening to Lamb. I have seldom spent a more agreeable few hours with him. He was serious and kind—his wit was subordinate to his judgment, as is usual in tête-à-tête parties. He spoke respectfully of an allegoric poem John [Payne] Collier has written ["The Poet's Pilgrimage," 1822]; says the style is remarkably good, adding 'It is like a collection of the duller parts of Spenser and not quite so good.' Speaking of Coleridge, he said, 'He ought not to have a wife or children; he should have a sort of diocesan care of the world—no parish duty.' He reprobated the prosecution of the 'Vision of Judgment' by Lord Byron; Southey's 'V. of J.' is more worthy of punishment, for his is an arrogance beyond endurance. Lord Byron's satire is one of the most good-natured description—no malevolence!!!" [1]

[1] Byron's "Vision of Judgment," a travesty of Southey's "Vision of Judgment," his official poem on the death of George III (in which Byron had been called the leader of the Satanic school), had

The next letter contains the famous dissuasion. Barton had nourished thoughts of throwing up the bank and taking to literature. Says Lamb: "'Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of Booksellers would afford you'!!! Throw yourself rather, my dear Sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron spikes. If you had but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the Booksellers. They are Turks and Tartars, when they have poor Authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors for bread, some repining, others envying the blessed security of a Counting House, all agreeing they had rather have been Taylors, Weavers, what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse.[1] You know not what a rapacious, dishonest set those booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book drudgery, what he has found them.[2] O you know not, may you never know! the miseries of subsisting by authorship. 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine, but a slavery

been printed in the *Liberal*, Leigh Hunt's paper, and led to a prosecution. Writing to Barton in January, 1824, Lamb says: "The Decision against Hunt for the 'Vision of Judgment' made me sick. What is to become of the old talk about OUR GOOD OLD KING—his personal virtues saving us from a revolution &c. &c. Why, none that think it can utter it now. It must stink. And the Vision is really, as to Him-ward, such a tolerant good humour'd thing. What a wretched thing a Lord Chief Justice is, always was, and will be!" Hunt was John Hunt, Leigh Hunt's brother, the publisher of the *Liberal*, who was fined £100 for the libel said to be contained in Byron's satire, and bound over to be of good behaviour.

[1] George Burnett.

[2] An exaggeration. Southey never made more than a competency, and that only by ceaseless toil.

worse than all slavery to be a bookseller's dependent, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious TASK-WORK.

"Those fellows hate *us*. The reason I take to be, that, contrary to other trades, in which the Master gets all the credit (a Jeweller or Silversmith for instance), and the Journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the background, in *our* work the world gives all the credit to Us, whom *they* consider as *their* Journeymen, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches. I contend, that a Bookseller has a *relative honesty* towards Authors, not like his honesty to the rest of the world. B[aldwin], who first engag'd me as Elia, has not paid me up yet (nor any of us without repeated mortifying applials), yet how the Knave fawned while I was of service to him! Yet I dare say the fellow is punctual in settling his milk-score, &c. Keep to your Bank, and the Bank will keep you. Trust not to the Public, you may hang, starve, drown yourself, for anything that worthy *Personage* cares.

"I bless every star that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the Banking Office; what, is there not from six to Eleven P.M. 6 days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man's time,—if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. O the corroding torturing tormenting thoughts, that disturb the Brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance. Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of mercantile employment, look upon them as Lovers' quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome, dead timber of a desk, that makes me live."

It was in the early months of this year that Sara Coleridge came with her mother on a visit to her father at the Gillmans'. She was then twenty-one and had already translated into excellent English Martin Dobrizhoffer's *History of the Abipones*, the payment for which was intended by her to pay her brother Derwent's college fees.

Writing to Barton on February 17th Lamb says: "Yes, I have seen Miss Coleridge, and wish I had just such a—daughter. God love her—to think that she should have had to toil thro' five octavos of that cursed (I forget I write to a Quaker) Abbeypony History, and then to abridge them to 3, and all for £113. At her years, to be doing stupid Jesuits' Latin into English, when she should be reading or writing Romances. Heaven send her Uncle [Southey] do not breed her up a Quarterly Reviewer!" Sara's romancing days came later, when she wrote *Phantasmagoria*. And again, on March 11th, Lamb writes: "The she Coleridges have taken flight, to my regret. With Sara's own-made acquisitions, her unaffectedness and no-pretensions are beautiful. You might pass an age with her without suspecting that she knew any thing but her mother's tongue. I don't mean any reflection on Mrs. Coleridge here. I had better have said her vernacular idiom. Poor C. I wish he had a home to receive his daughter in. But he is but as a stranger or a visitor in this world."

A story is told of Lamb visiting at the Gillmans' while Sara Coleridge was there, and immensely enjoying the interpolations "My uncle doesn't think so" which she thought it her duty to make during one of her father's monologues. At last Coleridge had to pause for breath, which gave Lamb the opportunity, mimicking her tones, to break in with the same gentle, but, under the circumstances, extremely provocative, comment.

Possibly it was on this occasion that the pleasant

incident occurred that is recorded by C. R. Leslie, the painter, in his *Autobiographical Recollections*: "I dined with Lamb one day at Mr. Gillman's. Returning to town in the stage-coach, which was filled with Mr. Gillman's guests, we stopped for a minute or two at Kentish Town. A woman asked the coachman, 'Are you full inside?' upon which Lamb put his head through the window and said, 'I am quite full inside; that last piece of pudding at Mr. Gillman's did the business for me.'"

On April 4th the literary dinner at Monkhouse's was eaten. Crabb Robinson mentions it in his *Diary*, and again in a letter to the *Athenæum*, thirty years later. In his *Diary* he wrote: "April 4th:—Dined at Monkhouse's. Our party consisted of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, and Rogers. Five poets of very unequal worth and most disproportionate popularity, whom the public probably would arrange in the very inverse order, except that it would place Moore above Rogers. During this afternoon, Coleridge alone displayed any of his peculiar talent. He talked much and well. I have not for years seen him in such excellent health and spirits. His subjects metaphysical criticism—Wordsworth he chiefly talked to. Rogers occasionally let fall a remark. Moore seemed conscious of his inferiority. He was very attentive to Coleridge, but seemed to relish Lamb, whom he sat next. L. was in a good frame—kept himself within bounds and was only cheerful at last. . . . I was at the bottom of the table, where I very ill performed my part. . . . I walked home late with Lamb."

In his *Athenæum* account (June 25th, 1853) Robinson wrote: "I can still recall to my mind the look and tone with which Lamb addressed Moore, when he could not articulate very distinctly:—'Mister Moore, will you drink a glass of wine with me?'—suiting the action to the word, and hob-nobbing. Then he went on—'Mister Moore, till now I have always felt an

antipathy to you, but now that I have seen you I shall like you ever after.' " [1]

Moore wrote thus in his *Journal*: " Dined at Mr. Monkhouse's (a gentleman I had never seen before) on Wordsworth's invitation, who lives there whenever he comes to town. A singular party: Coleridge, Rogers, Wordsworth and wife, Charles Lamb (the hero, at present, of the 'London Magazine'), and his sister (the poor woman who went mad in a diligence on the way to Paris), and a Mr. Robinson, one of the *minora sidera* of this constellation of the Lakes, the host himself, a Mæcenas of the school, contributing nothing but good dinners and silence. Charles Lamb, a clever fellow certainly; but full of villainous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute. Some excellent things, however, have come from him. . . . Lamb quoted an epitaph, by Clio Rickman, in which, after several lines, in the usual jog-trot style of epitaph, he continued thus :—

> 'He well performed the husband's, father's, part,
> And knew immortal Hudibras by heart.'

A good deal of talk with Lamb about De Foe's works, which he praised warmly, particularly 'Colonel Jack,' of which he mentioned some striking passages. Is collecting the works of the Dunciad heroes."

This is Lamb's description of the same dinner party, in a letter to Barton on April 5th: " I wishd for you yesterday. I dined in Parnassus, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore—half the Poetry of England constellated and clustered in Gloster Place! It was a delightful Even! Coleridge was in his finest

[1] In some verses to Barry Cornwall in the *London Magazine* in September, 1820, Lamb had written :—

> " Let hate, or grosser heats, their foulness mask
> In riddling *Junius*, or in *L——e's* name " :

L——e being Thomas Little (*i.e.*, Thomas Moore), the author of some rather free Anacreontics. When Lamb reprinted the poem, in 1830, the second line was altered.

vein of talk, had all the talk, and let 'em talk as evilly as they do of the envy of Poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses were dumb, while Apollo lectured on his and their fine Art. It is a lie that Poets are envious, I have known the best of them, and can speak to it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest critics as well as best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aking head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night. Marry, it was Hippocras rather."

On April 25th we have this pleasant opening to a letter to Miss Hutchinson, which should be studied also in the facsimile in my edition of Lamb's correspondence: "Mary has such an invincible reluctance to any epistolary exertion, that I am sparing her a mortification by taking the pen from her. The plain truth is, she writes such a pimping, mean, detestable hand, that she is ashamed of the formation of her letters. There is an essential poverty and abjectness in the frame of them. They look like begging letters. And then she is sure to omit a most substantial word in the second draught (for she never ventures an epistle, without a foul copy first) which is obliged to be interlined, which spoils the neatest epistle, you know [*the word "epistle" is underlined*]. Her figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., where she has occasion to express numerals, as in the date (25 Apr 1823), are not figures, but Figurantes. And the combined posse go staggering up and down shameless as drunkards in the day time. It is no better when she rules her paper, her lines are 'not less erring' than her words—a sort of unnatural parallel lines, that are perpetually threatening to meet, which you know is quite contrary to Euclid [*here Lamb has ruled lines grossly unparallel*]. Her very blots are not bold like this [*here a bold blot*], but poor smears [*here a poor smear*] half left in and half scratched out, with another smear left in their place. I like a clean letter. A bold free hand, and a fearless flourish. Then she has always

to go thro' them (a second operation) to dot her i s, and cross her t s. I don't think she can make a cork screw, if she tried—which has such a fine effect at the end or middle of an epistle—and fills up—

[*Here Lamb has made a corkscrew two inches long.*] There is a corkscrew, one of the best I ever drew. By the way, what incomparable whiskey that was of Monkhouse's. But if I am to write a letter, let me begin, and not stand flourishing like a fencer at a fair."

Later is this sentence: "I am afraid our co-visit [possibly to the Lakes] with Coleridge was a dream. . . . I think the Gillmans would scarce trust him with us, I have a malicious knack at cutting of apron strings."

And now we come to a new acquaintance, John Bates Dibdin, son of Charles Dibdin the younger, and therefore grandson of the author of *Tom Bowling*. Young Dibdin (who was twenty-five years of age) was a clerk in a merchant's office in Old Jewry, and, like Lamb, interested in literary pursuits in his spare time, having some editorial connection with the *European Magazine*. I borrow from Canon Ainger an interesting account of the beginning of Dibdin's friendship with Lamb, written by Dibdin's sister, Mrs. Tonna. Her brother, she says, "had constant occasion to conduct the giving or taking of cheques, as it might be, at the India House. There he always selected the 'little clever man' in preference to the other clerks. At that time the *Elia* essays were appearing in print. No one had the slightest conception who 'Elia' was. He was talked of everywhere, and everybody was trying to find him out, but without success. At last, from the style and manner of conveying his ideas and opinions on different subjects, my brother began to suspect that Lamb was the individual so widely sought for, and wrote some lines to him, anonymously, sending them by post to his residence, with the hope of sifting him on the subject. Although Lamb could not *know* who sent him the lines, yet he looked very hard

at the writer of them the next time they met, when he walked up, as usual, to Lamb's desk in the most unconcerned manner, to transact the necessary business. Shortly after, when they were again in conversation, something dropped from Lamb's lips which convinced his hearer, beyond a doubt, that his suspicions were correct. He therefore wrote some more lines (anonymously, as before), beginning—

"'I've found thee out, O Elia!'

and sent them to Colebrook Row. The consequence was that at their next meeting Lamb produced the lines, and after much laughing, confessed himself to be *Elia*. This led to a warm friendship between them." The friendship unhappily was destined to be but short, for Dibdin died of consumption in 1828. He had, however, preserved all of Lamb's letters to him, some of which are very delightful.

Two passages from Crabb Robinson :—

"May 3, 1823 :—Read the *London Magazine* in bed. Lamb's 'Poor Relations.' It is not quite agreeable—some observations on poverty which it is painful to make.

"May 17, 1823 :—Walked to Dalston. I read to Miss Lamb, who was alone, 2 acts of 'Iphigenia' and heard her read. We looked over German together. I was delighted at the opportunity of giving her pleasure."

In June the Lambs were at Hastings, with Miss James, Mary Lamb's nurse. A letter from Mary Lamb to Mrs. Randal Norris, written at York Cottage, No. 4, The Priory, tells the news : "We took our places for Sevenoaks, intending to remain there all night in order to see Knole, but when we got there we chang'd our minds, and went on to Tunbridge Wells. About a mile short of the Wells the coach stopped at a little inn, and I saw 'Lodgings to let' on a little, very little, house opposite. I ran over the way, and secured them

before the coach drove away, and we took immediate possession: it proved a very comfortable place, and we remained there nine days. The first evening, as we were wandering about, we met a lady, the wife of one of the India House clerks, with whom we had been slightly acquainted some years ago, which slight acquaintance has been ripened into a great intimacy during the nine pleasant days that we passed at the Wells. She and her two daughters went with us in an open chaise to Knole, and as the chaise held only five, we mounted Miss James upon a little horse, which she rode famously. I was very much pleased with Knole, and still more with Penshurst, which we also visited. We saw Frant and the Rocks, and made much use of your Guide Book, only Charles lost his way once going by the map.

"We were in constant exercise the whole time, and spent our time so pleasantly that when we came here on Monday we missed our new friends and found ourselves very dull. We are by the seaside in a *still less* house, and we have exchanged a very pretty landlady for a very ugly one, but she is equally attractive to us. We eat turbot, and we drink smuggled Hollands, and we walk up hill and down hill all day long. In the little intervals of rest that we allow ourselves I teach Miss James French; she picked up a few words during her foreign Tour with us, and she has had a hankering after it ever since.

"We came from Tunbridge Wells in a Postchaise, and would have seen Battle Abbey on the way, but it is only shewn on a Monday. We are trying to coax Charles into a Monday's excursion. And Bexhill we are also thinking about. Yesterday evening we found out by chance the most beautiful view I ever saw. It is called 'The Lovers' Seat.'"

Lamb, who was not happy by the sea, was chiefly taken at Hastings not by the Lovers' Seat but by Hollingdon Rural Church. His letters contain three

descriptions of the little fane, best of which is that to Dibdin in 1826, when Dibdin was at Hastings alone : "Let me hear that you have clamber'd up to Lover's Seat ; it is as fine in that neighbourhood as Juan Fernandez, as lonely too, when the Fishing boats are not out ; I have sat for hours, staring upon a shipless sea. The salt sea is never so grand as when it is left to itself. One cock-boat spoils it. A sea-mew or two improves it. And go to the little church, which is a very protestant Loretto, and seems dropt by some angel for the use of a hermit who was at once parishioner and a whole parish. It is not too big. Go in the night, bring it away in your portmanteau, and I will plant it in my garden. It must have been erected in the very infancy of British Christianity, for the two or three first converts ; yet hath it all the appertenances of a church of the first magnitude, its pulpit, its pews, its baptismal font ; a cathedral in a nutshell. Seven people would crowd it like a Caledonian Chapel. The minister that divides the word there, must give lumping pennyworths. It is built to the text of two or three assembled in my name. It reminds me of the grain of mustard seed. If the glebe land is proportionate, it may yield two potatoes. Tythes out of it could be no more split than a hair. Its First fruits must be its Last, for 'twould never produce a couple. It is truly the strait and narrow way, and few there be (of London visitants) that find it. The still small voice is surely to be found there, if any where. A sounding board is merely there for ceremony. It is secure from earthquakes, not more from sanctity than size, for 'twould feel a mountain thrown upon it no more than a taper-worm would. Go and see, but not without your spectacles."

De Quincey, who had no gift for accuracy, locates at Hastings a good story of Lamb's stammering, which Lamb himself versified for the late Archdeacon Hessey when he was a boy at the Merchant Taylors' school.

My own impression is that it belongs to an early Margate visit; but here it is: "Coleridge told me of a ludicrous embarrassment which it [Lamb's impediment] caused him at Hastings. Lamb had been medically advised to a course of sea-bathing; and accordingly at the door of his bathing machine, whilst he stood shivering with cold, two stout fellows laid hold of him, one at each shoulder, like heraldic supporters: they waited for the word of command from their principal, who began the following oration to them: 'Hear me, men! Take notice of this—I am to be dipped.' What more he would have said is unknown to land or sea or bathing machines; for having reached the word dipped, he commenced such a rolling fire of Di—di—di—di, that when at length he descended *à plomb* upon the full word *dipped*, the two men, rather tired of the long suspense, became satisfied that they had reached what lawyers call the 'operative' clause of the sentence; and both exclaiming at once, 'Oh yes, Sir, we're quite aware of *that*'—down they plunged him into the sea.

"On emerging, Lamb sobbed so much from the cold, that he found no voice suitable to his indignation; from necessity he seemed tranquil; and again addressing the men, who stood respectfully listening, he began thus:—'Men! is it possible to obtain your attention?'—'Oh surely, sir, by all means.'—'Then listen: once more I tell you, I am to be di—di—di—' —and then, with a burst of indignation, 'dipped, I tell you' ——'Oh decidedly, sir,' rejoined the men, 'decidedly' —and down the stammerer went for the second time. Petrified with cold and wrath, once more Lamb made a feeble attempt at explanation—'Grant me pa—pa—patience; is it mum—um—murder you me—me—mean? Again and a—ga—ga—gain, I tell you, I'm to be di—di—dipped,' now speaking furiously, with the voice of an injured man. 'Oh yes, sir,' the men replied, 'we know that—we fully understood it'—

and for the third time down went Lamb into the sea. 'Oh limbs of Satan!' he said, on coming up for the third time, 'it's now too late; I tell you that I am—no, that I *was*—to be di—di—di—dipped only *once*.'" [1]

After telling Barton of Hollingdon Church on July 10th, 1823, Lamb adds: "Southey has attacked Elia on the score of infidelity, in the *Quarterly*—Article, 'Progress of Infidels.' I had not, nor have, seen the *Monthly*. He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion. If all his UNGUARDED expressions on the subject were to be collected——

"But I love and respect Southey—and will not retort. I HATE HIS REVIEW, and his being a Reviewer.

"The hint he has droppd will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before.

"Let it stop. There is corn in Egypt, while there is cash at Leadenhall. You and I are something besides being Writers. Thank God."

This brings us to the "Letter to Southey," which although not published until October was probably written, in spite of Lamb's statement that he would not retort, soon after, during Mary Lamb's illness. In a review of a work by Grégoire on Deism in France, in the *Quarterly* for January, which presumably had only just been published, Southey had referred incidentally to *Elia*. The article was called "The Progress of Infidelity" and in it Southey found occasion to say:—

> Unbelievers have not always been honest enough thus to express their real feelings; but this we know concerning them, that when they have renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupify the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in Elia's Essays, a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to

[1] Leigh Hunt also tells the story, in one of his periodicals; and Mrs. Mathews tells it too.

be as delightful as it is original. In that upon 'Witches and other Night Fears,' he says: "It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children. They can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own 'thick-coming fancies'; and from his little midnight pillow this nurse child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the cell-damned murderer are tranquillity."

The "Letter to Southey" called forth by this passage does not, I think, show Lamb at his best. That he had provocation must be admitted, for Southey's comment on *Elia* was foolish and unnecessary, while, as Lamb implies, the book and its author had already suffered so much from want of recognition that this last affront was peculiarly irritating. Yet the Letter does not so much assert that Southey's judgment was wrong, as that, on account of youthful flippancies, he was not the man to make it: a line of argument which, coming from so broad-minded a man as Charles Lamb, is not too admirable. Although Southey had taken a narrow view of the book, his view was sincere. Moreover it was the view of the matured and developed Southey of that time, and not of the less respectable and reverend Southey of many years earlier of whom Lamb was at pains to remind him. The Letter, however, contains two passages, at any rate, which could not be spared. This:—

One man shall love his friends and his friends' faces; and, under the uncertainty of conversing with them again, in the same manner and familiar circumstances of sight, speech, &c., as upon earth—in a moment of no irreverent weakness—for a dream while—no more—would be almost content, for a reward of a life of virtue (if he could ascribe such acceptance to his lame performances), to take up his portion with those he loved, and was made to love, in this good world, which he knows—which was created so lovely beyond his deservings. Another, embracing a more exalted vision

—so that he might receive indefinite additaments of power, knowledge, beauty, glory, &c.—is ready to forego the recognition of humbler individualities of earth, and the old familiar faces. The shapings of our heavens are the modifications of our constitution; and Mr. Feeble Mind, or Mr. Great Heart, is born in every one of us.

And the list of some of the chief friends whom Lamb honoured :—

In more than one place, if I mistake not, you have been pleased to compliment me at the expence of my companions. I cannot accept your compliment at such a price. The upbraiding a man's poverty naturally makes him look about him, to see whether he be so poor indeed as he is presumed to be. You have put me upon counting my riches. Really, Sir, I did not know I was so wealthy in the article of friendships. There is ——, and ——, whom you never heard of, but exemplary characters both, and excellent church-goers; and N[orris], mine and my father's friend for nearly half a century; and the enthusiast for Wordsworth's poetry, T. N. T[alfourd], a little tainted with Socinianism, it is to be feared, but constant in his attachments, and a capital critic; and ——, a sturdy old Athanasian, so that sets all to rights again; and W[ainewright], the light, and warm-as-light hearted, Janus of the London; and the translator of Dante, still a curate, modest and amiable C[ary]; and Allan C[unningham], the large-hearted Scot; and P[rocter], candid and affectionate as his own poetry; and A[llsop], Coleridge's friend; and G[illman], his more than friend; and Coleridge himself, the same to me still, as in those old evenings, when we used to sit and speculate (do you remember them, Sir ?) at our old Salutation tavern, upon Pantisocracy and golden days to come on earth; and W[ordsworth] (why, Sir, I might drop my rent-roll here; such goodly farms and manors have I reckoned up already. In what possessions has not this last name alone estated me !—but I will go on)—and M[onkhouse], the noble-minded kinsman, by wedlock, of W[ordsworth]; and H. C. R[obinson], unwearied in the offices of a friend; and Clarkson, almost above the narrowness of that relation, yet condescending not seldom heretofore from the labours of his world-embracing charity to bless my humble roof; and the gall-less and single-minded Dyer; and the high-minded associate of Cook, the veteran Colonel [Phillips], with his lusty heart still sending cartels of defiance to old Time; and, not least, W. A[yrton], the last and steadiest left to me of that little knot of whist-players, that used to assemble weekly, for so many years, at the Queen's Gate (you remember them, Sir ?) and called Admiral Burney friend.

Lamb then went on more particularly to defend Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt against Southey's disapproval.

The Letter created some little stir in literary circles. The *Times* defended its writer :—

The number just published of the *London Magazine* contains a curious letter from Elia (Charles Lamb) to Mr. Southey. It treats the laureate with that contempt which his always uncandid and frequently malignant spirit deserves. When it is considered that Mr. Lamb has been the fast friend of Southey, and is besides of a particularly kind and peaceable nature, it is evident that nothing but gross provocation could have roused him to this public declaration of his disgust.

Professor Wilson (Christopher North), in *Blackwood*, on the other hand, administerd heavy castigation :—

Our dearly-beloved friend, Charles Lamb (we would fain call him Elia ; but that, as he himself says, "would be as good as naming him"), what is this you are doing ? Mr. Southey, having read your Essays, wished to pay you a compliment, and called them, in the "Quarterly," "a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original !" And with this eulogy you are not only dissatisfied, but so irate at the Laureate, that nothing will relieve your bile, but a Letter to the Doctor of seven good pages in "The London." Prodigious ! Nothing would content your highness (not serene) of the India-House, but such a sentence as would sell your lucubrations as a puff ; and because Taylor and Hessey cannot send this to the newspapers, you wax sour, sulky, and vituperative of your old crony, and twit him with his "old familiar faces." This is, our dear Charles, most unreasonable —most unworthy of you ; and we know not how to punish you with sufficient severity, now that Hodge of Tortola is no more ; but the inflexible Higgins of Nevis still survives, and we must import him to flog you in the market-place.[1]

Coleridge and Hazlitt, however, both commended Lamb ; and Crabb Robinson called the Letter "delightful." In his *Diary* (just returned from his holiday) he writes : "October 26th :—I met with Talfourd, and heard from him much of the literary gossip of the last quarter. Sutton Sharpe, whom I called on, gave me a second edition, and lent me the last *London Magazine*, containing Lamb's delightful letter to Southey, which Southey must feel. His remarks on religion are full

[1] A reference to Lamb's *Elia* essay on Christ's Hospital.

of deep feeling, and his eulogy on Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt most generous. Lamb must be aware that he would expose himself to obloquy by such declarations. It seems that he and Hazlitt are no longer on friendly terms. I do not wish them to be reconciled. L. has introduced the names or initials of his friends. I was gratified by finding in the Catalogue 'H. C. R. unwearied in every office of a friend.' Nothing that Lamb has ever written has impressed me more strongly with the sweetness of his disposition, the strength of his affections." [1]

Again, writing to Dorothy Wordsworth on October 31st, Robinson says: "You have seen Elia's letter to Southey. There are a few passages I could wish away, but with the exception of them it is a delightful composition. I do not think he has bribed me to this judgment. There is a generosity in this writing almost heroic—Lamb is well aware that he *alone* has been taken into favour by the public of those—

> 'five other wandering bards that move
> In sweet accord of harmony and love.' [2]

He knows that there are not two characters more generally detested in the country than L. H. and W. H. and that he will never be forgiven for this vo[lunta]ry tho' qualified and discriminating testimony in their favour. My dislike of Hazlitt almost amounts to hatred, yet I shall have inclination to look kindly on him when I recollect that L. has *so* written of him. . . . Stewart Rose says that the sale of his Letters from Italy was stopped at once on account of a hint in the

[1] Nearly a year later Robinson has this entry, while on circuit: "August 12th, 1824:—All day in Court. In one cause I held a brief under Henry Cooper. The attorney, a stranger, Garwood, of Wells, told me that he was informed by his friend Evans (the son of my old friend, Joseph Evans), that I was the H. C. R. mentioned in the *London Magazine* as the friend of Elia. 'I love Elia,' said Mr. Garwood; 'and that was enough to make me come to you!'"

[2] See page 164.

Quarterly that there were some *improprieties* in the book, and I have no doubt that Southey has utterly ruined the sale of *Elia*, and perhaps the popularity of Lamb for ever as a writer, by his article. If L. were above regarding the sale of his books, he need not fear that his reputation would suffer, for the article is flattering enough to his genius.

"However," Robinson adds, "I believe it was an inadvertence of S. only"; and Southey's wholly admirable letter in reply to Lamb bears out Robinson's opinion. It is dated November 19th, 1823:—

"My Dear Lamb—On Monday I saw your letter in the *London Magazine*, which I had not before had an opportunity of seeing, and I now take the first interval of leisure for replying to it.

"Nothing could be further from my mind than any intention or apprehension of any way offending or injuring a man concerning whom I have never spoken, thought, or felt otherwise than with affection, esteem, and admiration.

"If you had let me know in any private or friendly manner that you felt wounded by a sentence in which nothing but kindness was intended—or that you found it might injure the sale of your book—I would most readily and gladly have inserted a note in the next Review to qualify and explain what had hurt you.

"You have made this impossible, and I am sorry for it. But I will not engage in controversy with you to make sport for the Philistines.

"The provocation must be strong indeed that can rouse me to do this, even with an enemy. And if you can forgive an unintended offence as heartily as I do the way in which you have resented it, there will be nothing to prevent our meeting as we have heretofore done, and feeling towards each other as we have always been wont to do.

"Only signify a correspondent willingness on your

part, and send me your address, and my first business next week shall be to reach your door, and shake hands with you and your sister. Remember me to her most kindly and believe me—Yours, with unabated esteem and regards,

"Robert Southey."

Lamb replied at once, and his answer shows that the *Quarterly* rather than Southey was the especial object of his wrath—the *Quarterly*, which had in 1811 referred to him as a "maniac," in 1814 doctored his review of Wordsworth, and in 1822 stated as a fact that the "Confessions of a Drunkard" were autobiographical.

"Dear Southey—The kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed Q. R. had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the *Confessions of a D——d* was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things, that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw, in a few obnoxious words, a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wished both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time.

"I will muster up courage to see you, however, any day next week (Wednesday excepted). We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification. She will hate to see us; but come and heap embers. We deserve it; I for what I've done, and she for being my sister.

"Do come early in the day, by sun-light, that you may see my *Milton*.

"I am at Colebrook Cottage, Colebrook Row, Islington. A detached whitish house, close to the New River, end of Colebrook Terrace, left hand from Sadler's Wells.

"Will you let me know the day before?

"Your penitent,

"C. Lamb.

"*P.S.*—I do not think your handwriting at all like ****'s. I do not think many things I did think." [1]

Southey, as he promised, did not make any public rejoinder. But in 1830, when the *Literary Gazette* treated Lamb's *Album Verses* with derision and contempt, he sent to the *Times*, as we shall see, a poem in praise of his friend.

Lamb's letter to Barton, dated September 2nd, had first told us that he had again moved. "When you come London-ward you will find me no longer in Cov^t. Gard. I have a Cottage, in Colebrook row, Islington. A cottage, for it is detach'd; a white house, with 6 good rooms; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden, with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining room, all studded over and rough with old Books, and above is a lightsome Drawing room, 3 windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great Lord, never having had a house before. . . .

"I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gather'd my Jargonels, but my Windsor Pears are backward.

[1] In the "Letter to Southey" Lamb had said that he had opened letters from Leigh Hunt hoping they were from Southey—such was the similarity of their hands.

The former were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine, and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of FATHER ADAM. I recognise the paternity, while I watch my tulips. I almost FELL with him, for the first day I turned a drunken gard'ner (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, &c., which hung over from a neighbor's garden, and in his blind zeal laid waste a shade, which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talk'd of the Law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden-state.'"

In a "Wishing Cap" article in the *Examiner* for April 4th, 1824, Leigh Hunt thus addresses Lamb on his change of abode: "C. L., why didst thou ever quit Russell Street? Why didst thou leave the warm crowd of humanity, which thou lovest so well, to go and shiver on the side of the New River, inticing thy unwary friends to walk in? Were friends and sittings up at night too attractive? And was there no other way to get rid of them? Reader, we have not waked the night-owl with a catch, for C. L. is not musical. He will put up with nothing but snatches of old songs. Mozart is to him an alien, and Paesiello the Pope of Rome. . . .

"What would I not give for another Thursday evening? It was humanity's triumph; for whist-players and no whist-players there for the first time met together. Talk not to me of great houses in which such things occur; for there the whist-players are gamblers, and the no whist-players are nobody at all. Here, the whist was for its own sake, and yet the non-players were tolerated. But the triumph went further. Here was R. [Rickman] to represent among

us the plumpness of office, and the solidity of the government. My brother Reformer, W. H. [Hazlitt], came to rest his disappointments and his paradoxes. Vain expectation! With him contended A. [Ayrton], the most well-bred of musicians, who hates a paradox like an unresolved discord. Another A. [? Alsager] was there, the best of neighbours; especially if you happen to be confined to your room. Item, a third A. [Allsop], the most trusting of linen-drapers, who lent [*i.e.*, gave] a poet [Coleridge] a hundred pounds. I do not know whether he has been paid. I hope not; for he deserves to enjoy the interest for ever, and in his case it is a rich one. M. B. [Burney] was one of us, having his hands in his waistcoat pockets, like his friend, and talking well upon episodes.

"And thou, M. L.,—why have I not the art, like the old writers of dedications, of at once loading thee with panegyric and saving the shoulders of thy modesty? An art, by-the-by, which was so conspicuously concealed, that nobody would have suspected them of having it. There also came old Captain B. [Burney], who had been round the world with Cooke, and was the first man who planted a pun in Otaheite. Nevertheless, though I met him fifty times, I never had the courage to address him, he appeared to be so wrapped up in his tranquillity and his whist. He seemed to be taking a long repose from his storms. The jovial face of Colonel P. [Phillips], blooming with a second youth, made me bolder. He had been round the world also, when a boy, and had challenged his lieutenant for not standing closer by his captain. This illegality completed my confidence. With K. [Kenney] we rejoiced over his successful plays, and tried to be indifferent over the others."

Lamb's new house, Colebrook Cottage, in Colebrook Row, still (1920) stands. A neighbouring terrace joins it on one side, so that it is no longer detached, and the New River has been covered and railed in; but inside, the

house is much as it was. A tablet on the wall records Lamb's sojourn there.

Bernard Barton and his daughter journeyed to Islington not long after the move, and of this visit Lucy Barton (Mrs. Edward FitzGerald) wrote an account for me, in 1892, some seventy years later. Mary Lamb, she thinks, was from home at the time. What principally remained in Mrs. FitzGerald's mind was the circumstance that many of Lamb's books in his bookcase retained the white price labels that had been pasted on them by the second-hand booksellers. She also recollected that lunch consisted of oysters with their usual accompaniments.

We have a description of Colebrook Cottage in Hood's recollections of Lamb in *Hood's Own*. It was, he says (in reference to Coleridge's ballad "The Devil's Walk"), "a cottage of Ungentility, for it had neither double coach-house nor wings. Like its tenant, it stood alone. He said, glancing at the Paternoster one, that he did not like 'the Row.' There was a bit of a garden, in which, being, as he professed, more fond of 'Men Sects than of Insects,' he made probably his first and last observation in Entomology. He had been watching a spider in a gooseberry bush, entrapping a fly. 'Good God,' he said, 'I never saw such a thing! Directly he was caught in her fatal spinning, she darted down upon him, and in a minute turned him out, completely lapped in a shroud! It reminded me of the Fatal Sisters in Gray.'"

It is to the Colebrook period that George Daniel's reminiscences of Lamb chiefly belong, printed in his *Love's Labours Not Lost* in 1863. Daniel (who was born in 1789 and was therefore nearly fourteen years younger than Lamb), like Hone, another of Lamb's antiquarian friends, whom we shall soon see, had been an assiduous satirist of the Regent, but his principal work was the editing of Cumberland's *British Theatre* in thirty-nine volumes. He first met Lamb in 1817,

but it was not until the essayist became his neighbour in Islington that they were at all intimate. Daniel writes of those days (thus fortifying Lamb's remark to Barton, in the letter above, which looked a little like invention): "He took to the culture of plants, and now, having been honoured with his commands, I was, for the first time, of some use to him. He watched the growth of his tulips with the gusto of a veteran florist and became learned in all their gaudy varieties. He grew enamoured of anemones. He planted, pruned, and grafted; and seldom walked abroad without a bouquet in his button-hole! The rose, from its poetical associations with Carew's exquisite song,—

'Ask me no more, &c.'

was his favourite flower."

Of Lamb's interest in birds Daniel says: "They congregated upon his grass-plot, perched upon his window-sills, nestled in the eaves of his house-top, responded to his whistle, pecked up his plum cake. . . . It became one of his amusements to watch their motions. 'Commend me,' he said, 'to the sparrows for what our friend Mathews calls in his "At Home" "irregular appropriation." I remember seeing a precocious Newgate-bird snatch from the muckle-mouth of a plethoric prentice-boy a hissing-hot slice of plum-pudding, and transfer it to his own, to the diversion of the bystanders, who could not forbear laughing at the urchin's mendacious dexterity; but this sleight of hand feat is nothing to the celerity with which these feathered freebooters will make a tid-bit exchange beaks.' Seeing his growing fondness for birds, I offered him a beautiful bullfinch ensconced in a handsome cage. But he declined the present. 'Every song that it sung from its wiry prison,' said he, 'I could never flatter myself was meant for my ear; but rather a wistful note to the passing travellers of air that it were with them too! This would make me self-reproachful and sad. Yet I

should be loth to let the little captive fly, lest, being unused to liberty it should flutter itself to death, or starve.' " (These words obviously are the words of Daniel, although the sentiment may be Lamb's.)

Of Lamb's excursions Daniel says : " His occasional rambles rarely extended beyond Finchley, on the north ; Dulwich College (for its pictures !), on the south ; and Turnham-green, on the west. The east, with its narrow and tortuous *carrefours*, was unknown to him." Lamb was very fond of seeing the sun set from Canonbury Tower : " he was hand and glove with Goodman Symes, the then tenant of this venerable Tower, and a brother antiquary in a small way, who took pleasure in entertaining him in the oak panelled chamber where Goldsmith wrote his *Traveller* and supped on buttermilk ; pointing at the same time to a small coloured portrait of Shakespeare, in a curiously carved gilt frame, which Lamb would look at lovingly. . . . He was never weary of toiling up and down the steep, winding, narrow stairs of this suburban pile, and peeping into its sly corners and cupboards, as if he expected to discover there some hitherto hidden clue to its mysterious origin. The ancient hostelries of Islington and its vicinity he also visited. At the old *Queen's Head* he puffed his pipe, and quaffed his ale out of the huge tankard presented by a certain festivous Master Cranch, of a Bonifacial aspect and hue, to a former host."

Daniel adds : " It was here [the Old Queen's Head—Islington] that he chanced to fall in with that obese and burly figure of fun, Theodore Hook, who came to take a last look at this historical relic before it was pulled down. Hook accompanied him to Colebrook Cottage, which was hard by. During the evening Lamb (lightsome and lissom) proposed a race round the garden ; but Hook . . . declined the contest, remarking that he could outrun nobody but ' the constable.' " This is the only meeting between Lamb and Hook of

which I can find a record. Assuming the year to be 1826, Hook (who was in prison from 1823 to 1825), was thirty-eight.

A few of Lamb's detached sayings as reported by George Daniel are interesting ; but too much credence must not perhaps be placed in the narrative, which by the record of what was probably only an acquaintanceship. Lamb once remarked, " Socrates loved wild boar, Sophocles truffles, and why should not pig's meat be my gastronomical vanity ? " And speaking once of Abraham, he said that he would have respected him more if he had not spoken falsely to save himself and his wife at the court of Pharaoh. Of the " mean duplicity " of Jacob he spoke with sorrow.

Daniel was a friend of Robert Bloomfield, author of " The Farmer's Boy," who in those days lived in Islington. He speaks of dining with Lamb and Bloomfield at Colebrook Cottage in the autumn of 1823, and afterwards walking to Queen Elizabeth's Walk at Stoke Newington. But it must have been earlier, for Bloomfield died in August of that year. Writing to Barton in 1823 Lamb says of Bloomfield : " He dined with me once, and his manners took me exceedingly." We can, however, hardly include the rural poet among Lamb's friends. (Many years earlier when Lamb first met him, under Dyer's wing, he thought him " very poor company.")

During September both Charles and Mary Lamb seem to have been in very poor health ; and Lamb made his will, with Allsop, Talfourd and Procter as executors. Later he reduced the number of executors to two, Talfourd and Ryle. In the letter to Allsop making the request Lamb says, " I want to make my will, and to leave my property in trust for my sister. *N.B.* I am not *therefore* going to die " ; and again, the next day, " I hope it may be in the scheme of Providence that my sister may go first (if ever so little a precedence)." As it happened, Providence directed other-

wise. Cowden Clarke tells us that Lamb "once said (with his peculiar mode of tenderness, beneath blunt, abrupt speech), 'You must die first, Mary.' She nodded, with her little quiet nod, and sweet smile, 'Yes, I must die first, Charles.'"

By the middle of October both Lamb and his sister were well again. A note to Cary on October 14th, concerning a proposed visit, has this passage: "We were talking of Roast *Shoulder* of Mutton with onion sauce; but I scorn to prescribe to the hospitalities of mine host." And on October 31st Crabb Robinson writes to Dorothy Wordsworth: "The Lambs are now well. . . . Miss L. has been ill all this summer; she is now looking well, and the better because thinner."

It was a few days later that George Dyer, as we saw in Chapter XIV, walked into the New River from Lamb's garden. Lamb tells Mrs. Hazlitt about it in an amusing letter. He adds: "I had the honour of dining at the Mansion House on Thursday last, by special card from the Lord Mayor, who never saw my face, nor I his; and all from being a writer in a magazine! The dinner costly, served on massy plate; champagne, pines, &c.; 47 present, among whom the Chairman and two other directors of the India Company. There's for you! and got away pretty sober! Quite saved my credit!" So ends 1823.

CHAPTER XLI

1824

A Lethargy—Hazlitt's *Select British Poets*—Manning Rapt—Peter George Patmore—A Parody of Lamb—Lamb's Clothes—William Blake—Byron's Death—Munden's Farewell—Lamb and Mrs. Barbauld Again—Some "Maddish Spirits"—An Evening with Coleridge—Edward Irving—Procter's Marriage—Mary Russell Mitford—A Warning to Barton—"Saint Charles."

BETWEEN December, 1823, and September, 1824, Lamb published nothing; his health seems to have been indifferent and his spirits low. But towards the end of the year came a revival, when for a while he was again busy and now and then almost at his best.

Writing to Barton on January 23rd he says: "The fact is I have been insuperably dull and lethargic for many weeks, and cannot rise to the vigour of a Letter, much less an Essay. The 'London' must do without me for a time, a time, and half a time, for I have lost all interest about it, and whether I shall recover it again I know not. . . . I shall begin to feel a little more alive with the spring. Winter is to me (mild or harsh) always a great trial of the spirits." Again, a month later: ". . . And yet I am accounted by some people a good man. How cheap that character is acquired! Pay your debts, don't borrow money, nor twist your kitten's neck off, or disturb a congregation, &c.—your business is done. I know things (thoughts or things, thoughts are things) of myself which would make every friend I have fly me as a plague patient. I once * * *, and set a dog upon a crab's leg that was shoved out under a moss of sea weeds, a

pretty little feeler.—Oh ! pah ! how sick I am of that ; and a lie, a mean one, I once told !—

" I stink in the midst of respect.

" I am much hypt ; the fact is, my head is heavy ; but there is hope, or if not, I am better than a poor shell fish—not morally, when I set the whelp upon it, but have more blood and spirits. Things may turn up, and I may creep again into a decent opinion of myself. Vanity will return with sunshine."

A little later vanity did return : " While I have space, let me congratulate with you the return of the Spring—what a Summery Spring too ! all those qualms about the dog and cray-fish melt before it. I am going to be happy and *vain* again."

Meanwhile we have glimpses of the Lambs in Crabb Robinson's *Diary* :—

" January 10th, 1824 :—Walked out and called on Miss Lamb. I looked over Lamb's library in part. He has the finest collection of shabby books I ever saw ; such a number of first-rate works of genius, but filthy copies, which a delicate man would really hesitate touching, is I think nowhere to be found. I borrowed several books.

" Jan. 25 :—I walked up to Lamb's, Southern with me. I did not understand that he waited for me and kept him a long time. At length he knocked and came in. . . . N.B. Hazlitt at Lamb's. We did not speak." Henry Southern (1799-1852 ?) was the founder and editor of the *Retrospective Review*, and it was he who bought the *London Magazine* in 1825. Later he entered diplomatic life.

Hazlitt, who was about to marry the widow Bridgewater and disappear on his continental tour, was now lodging in Down Street, Piccadilly. He had written in his essay on " The Pleasures of Hating " that the " magnanimous " " Letter to Southey " made him want to be friends with Lamb again ; and a restored relation of cordiality, destined to be permanent, was

shortly afterwards established. I fancy also that Hazlitt had consulted Lamb upon the volume of extracts for the *Select British Poets* which he had been commissioned to prepare. The first edition was published in 1824, Lamb being represented by no fewer than eighteen poems and two extracts from "John Woodvil," and Mary Lamb by two poems. Of Lamb, Hazlitt wrote: "Mr. C. Lamb has produced no poems equal to his prose writings: but I could not resist the temptation of transferring into this collection his 'Farewell to Tobacco,' and some of the sketches in his 'John Woodvil,' the first of which is rarely surpassed in quaint wit, and the last in pure feeling." Hazlitt had, however, exceeded his rights; certain publishers objected that he had taken their property; and the book was suppressed, a new edition being issued in 1825 with no living authors included.

I return to Crabb Robinson:—

"Feb. 19:—At Lamb's to leave a magazine. Miss L. being alone I was tempted to dine with her, and a very agreeable two hours from 3 to 5 I had. With her I can unbosom myself cordially.

"Feb. 29, Sunday:—Went to Lamb's. Fanny Holcroft &c. there. Walked with F.: she is grown *old* and an object of compassion." Fanny Holcroft, Thomas Holcroft's daughter, was the author of several novels and other literary works. She died in 1844.

"March 5th:—Walked over to Lamb. Meant a short visit, but Monkhouse was there as well as Manning; so I took tea and stayed the whole evening, and played whist. Besides, the talk was agreeable. On religion, M[anning] talked as I did not expect; rather earnestly on the Atonement, as the essential doctrine of Christianity, but against the Trinity, which he thinks by a mere mistake has been adopted from Oriental philosophy, under a notion that it was necessary to the Atonement. C. L.'s impressions against religion are unaccountably strong, and yet he is by nature

pious. It is the dogmatism of theology which has disgusted him, and which alone he opposes; he has the organ of theosophy." Of Manning in a religious, or at least in a mystical, mood Allsop gives us this glimpse: "I retain a very vivid recollection of Manning, though so imperfect is my memory of persons that I should not recollect him at this time. I think few persons had so great a share of Lamb's admiration, for to few did he vouchsafe manifestations of his *very* extraordinary powers. Once, and once only, did I witness an outburst of his *unembodied* spirit, when such was the effect of his more than magnetic, his magic power (learnt was it in Chaldea, or in that sealed continent to which the super-human knowledge of Zoroaster was conveyed by Confucius, into which he was the first to penetrate with impunity?) that we were all rapt and carried aloft into the seventh heaven. He seemed to see and to convey to us clearly (I had almost said adequately), what was passing in the presence of the Great Disembodied One, rather by an intuition or the creation of a new sense than by words. Verily there are *more things on earth* than are dreamt of in our philosophy. I am unwilling to admit the influence this wonderful man had over his auditors, as I cannot at all convey an adequate notion or even image of his extraordinary and very peculiar powers."

In the spring of this year Peter George Patmore, whom we last saw as Scott's second in the fatal duel, comes upon the scene. Patmore, who was the father of Coventry Patmore, tells the story thus in *My Friends and Acquaintances:* "My first introduction to Charles Lamb took place accidentally at the lodgings of William Hazlitt, in Down St., Piccadilly, in 1824, and under circumstances which have impressed it with peculiar vividness on my memory. Mr. Colburn had published anonymously, only two or three days before, a jeu-d'esprit of mine, which aimed at being, to the prose literature of the day, something like what the *Rejected*

Addresses was to the poetry. . . . Scarcely had I been introduced to the new-comers, when Hazlitt pointed to the book which he had laid on the table on their entrance, and said to Miss Lamb, 'There's something there about Charles and you. Have you seen it?' Miss Lamb immediately took up the book, and began to read to herself (evidently with no very good will) the opening paper, which was an imitation of an Essay by Elia.

"Here was an accumulation of embarrassments, which no consideration could have induced me to encounter willingly, but which, being inevitable, I contrived to endure with great apparent composure; though the awkwardness of my position was not a little enhanced by Miss Lamb presently turning to her brother, and expressing feelings about what she had read, which indicated that her first impression was anything but a favourable or agreeable one. Lamb himself seemed to take no interest whatever in the matter. They stayed but a very short time."

Patmore's book, called *Rejected Articles*, is a collection of very poor imitations: that of Lamb being peculiarly inadequate. Patmore, however, has left some valuable notes upon Lamb. I quote from an article in the *Court Magazine* for 1835. He writes: "Lamb had laid aside his *snuff-coloured* suit before I knew him; and during the last ten years of his life, he was never seen in any thing but a suit of uniform black, with knee-breeches, and (sometimes, not always) gaiters of the same to meet them. Probably he was induced to admit this innovation by a sort of compromise with his affection for the colour of other years; for though his dress was 'black' in name and nature, he always contrived that it should exist only in a state of rusty brown. I can scarcely account for his having left off his suit of the latter colour, especially as he had stuck to it through the daily ordeal, for twenty years, of the Long Room of the East India House. He aban-

doned it, I think, somewhere about the time his friend Wordsworth put forth his *ideal* of the personal appearance of a *poet*; which may perchance have been drawn, in part, from Lamb himself,—so exact is the likeness in several leading particulars.

> 'But who is he, *with modest looks,*
> *And clad in homely russet brown,*
> Who murmurs near the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own?
>
> 'He is retired as noontide dew,
> Or fountain in a noonday grove;
> *And you must love him e'er to you*
> *He will seem worthy of your love.*'

"Now Lamb did not like to be taken for a poet, or for any thing else; so, latterly, he always dressed in a way to be taken, by ninety-nine people out of a hundred who looked at him, for a Methodist preacher! the last person in the world that he really *was* like! This was one of his little wilful contradictions."

Patmore, to whom we shall return, relates also a piquant but merciless story of Lamb's treatment of a pretentious minor poet. "He was to meet the gentleman at dinner, and the poems were shown to Lamb a little before the author's arrival. When he came he proved to be empty and conceited. During dinner Lamb fell into the delightful drollery of saying now and again, 'That reminds me of some verses I wrote when I was very young'; and then quoted a line or two which he recollected from the gentleman's book, to the latter's amusement and indignation. Lamb, immensely diverted, capped it all by introducing the first lines of *Paradise Lost*, 'Of man's first disobedience,' as also written by himself, which actually brought the gentleman on his feet bursting with rage. He said he had sat by and allowed his own 'little verses' to be taken without protest, but he could not endure to see Milton pillaged." A similar story is told of Macaulay, but in his case he is said to have memorised and

repeated, as he was able to do after one perusal, whole pages of his victim.

On March 24th we find Lamb advising Barton to have no hesitation in accepting a gift of £1,200 which some members of the Society of Friends had raised as a testimony to their sense of his merit : 'Every man is his own best Casuist ; and after all, as Ephraim Smooth, in the pleasant comedy of 'Wild Oats,' has it, 'there is no harm in a Guinea.' A fortiori there is less in 2,000."

The best letter of 1824 is that to Barton on May 15th, concerning William Blake (whom Lamb calls Robert). "Blake is a real name, I assure you, and a most extraordinary man, if he be still living. He is the Robert [William] Blake, whose wild designs accompany a splendid folio edition of the 'Night Thoughts,' which you may have seen, in one of which he pictures the parting of soul and body by a solid mass of human form floating off, God knows how, from a lumpish mass (fac Simile to itself) left behind on the dying bed. He paints in water colours marvellous strange pictures, visions of his brain, which he asserts that he has seen. They have great merit. He has *seen* the old Welsh bards on Snowdon—he has seen the Beautifullest, the strongest, and the Ugliest Man, left alone from the Massacre of the Britons by the Romans, and has painted them from memory (I have seen his paintings), and asserts them to be as good as the figures of Raphael and Angelo, but not better, as they had precisely the same retro-visions and prophetic visions with themself [himself]. The painters in oil (which he will have it that neither of them practised) he affirms to have been the ruin of art, and affirms that all the while he was engaged in his Water paintings, Titian was disturbing him, Titian the Ill Genius of Oil Painting. His Pictures—one in particular, the Canterbury Pilgrims (far above Stothard's)—have great merit, but hard, dry, yet with grace. He has written a Catalogue

of them with a most spirited criticism on Chaucer, but mystical and full of Vision. His poems have been sold hitherto only in Manuscript. I never read them; but a friend at my desire procured the 'Sweep Song.' There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning—

> 'Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
> Thro' the desarts of the night,'

which is glorious, but, alas! I have not the book; for the man is flown, whither I know not—to Hades or a Mad House. But I must look on him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age."

Blake was then living in Fountain Court, Strand, and was working on the Inventions to the Book of Job. He died in 1827. Lamb never met him, but Crabb Robinson had long conversations with him, and among the younger men who appreciated Blake's genius was, as we have seen, Wainewright, from whom Lamb may have heard of the sturdy mystic. Lamb sent the "Sweep's Song" for an album which James Montgomery edited in the interests of a philanthropic effort to ameliorate the lot of the climbing boys.

In the same letter in which Lamb writes of Blake he refers thus to the death of Byron, which had occurred on April 19th: "So we have lost another Poet. I never much relished his Lordship's mind, and shall be sorry if the Greeks have cause to miss him. He was to me offensive, and I never can make out his great *power*, which his admirers talk of. Why, a line of Wordsworth's is a lever to lift the immortal spirit! Byron can only move the Spleen. He was at best a Satyrist,—in any other way, he was mean enough. I dare say I do him injustice; but I cannot love him, nor squeeze a tear to his memory. He did not like the world, and he has left it, as Alderman Curtis advised the Radicals, 'If they don't like their country, damn 'em, let 'em leave it,' they possessing no rood of ground

in England, and he 10,000 acres. Byron was better than many Curtises."

On May 31st, 1824, says Talfourd, "one of Lamb's last ties to the theatre, as a scene of present enjoyment, was severed. Munden, the rich peculiarities of whose acting Lamb has embalmed in one of the choicest 'Essays of Elia,' quitted the stage in the mellowness of his powers. His relish for Munden's acting was almost a new sense: he did not compare him with the old comedians, as having common qualities with them, but regarded him as altogether of a different and original style. On the last night of his appearance, Lamb was very desirous to attend, but every place in the boxes had long been secured; and Lamb was not strong enough to stand the tremendous rush, by enduring which, alone, he could hope to obtain a place in the pit; when Munden's gratitude for his exquisite praise anticipated his wish, by providing for him and Miss Lamb places in a corner of the orchestra, close to the stage.

"The play of the 'Poor Gentleman,' in which Munden played 'Sir Robert Bramble,' had concluded, and the audience were impatiently waiting for the farce, in which the great comedian was to delight them for the last time, when my attention was suddenly called to Lamb by Miss Kelly, who sat with my party far withdrawn into the obscurity of one of the Upper Boxes, but overlooking the radiant hollow which waved below us, to our friend.[1] In his hand, directly beneath the line of stage-lights, glistened a huge porter pot, which he was draining; while the broad face of old Munden was seen thrust out from the door by which the musicians enter, watching the close of the draught, when he might receive and hide the portentous beaker from the gaze of the admiring neighbours. Some unknown benefactor had sent four pots of stout

[1] This is Talfourd's grammar—I have not altered it.

to keep up the veteran's heart during his last trial; and, not able to drink them all, he bethought him of Lamb, and without considering the wonder which would be excited in the brilliant crowd who surrounded him, conveyed himself the cordial chalice to Lamb's parched lips. At the end of the same farce, Munden found himself unable to deliver from memory a short and elegant address which one of his sons had written for him; but, provided against accidents, took it from his pocket, wiped his eyes, put on his spectacles, read it, and made his last bow. This was, perhaps, the last night when Lamb took a hearty interest in the present business scene; for though he went now and then to the theatre to gratify Miss Isola, or to please an author who was his friend, his real stage henceforth only spread itself out in the selectest chambers of his memory." That was also the occasion, the Cowden Clarkes tell us, of Mary Lamb's pun, "Sic transit gloria Munden."

Crabb Robinson's *Diary* again :—

"June 1st, 1824 :—I was induced to engage myself to dine with C. Lamb. After dinner he and I took a walk to Newington. I sat an hour with Mrs. Barbauld. She was looking tolerably, but Lamb (not his habit) was disputatious with her, and not in his best way. He reasons from feelings, and those often idiosyncrasies; she from dry abstractions and verbal definitions. Such people can't agree, and infallibly dislike each other. We came back to a late dish of tea. Godwin &c. there. I had whist with M. L., G. and his ill-bred son William. The loud laugh of the father and the noisy knock on the table of the son together put me out of humour, and I came away early, though there came in some agreeable people." Godwin's son, who was then twenty-one, had just become a reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*. He died in 1832. He does not come into the life of Lamb directly, but indirectly we have to thank him, for it was he who by his impor-

tunity as a caller provoked Lamb to the little essay called "Many Friends," in the *New Times* in 1825.

"June 10th :—I dined at Lamb's, and then walked with him to Highgate [to Gillman's], self-invited. There we found a large party. Mr. and Mrs. Green, the Aderses, Irving, Collins, R. A., a Mr. Taylor, a young man of talents in the Colonial Office, Basil Montagu, a Mr. Chance, and one or two others. It was a *rich* evening. Coleridge talked his best, and it appeared better because he and Irving supported the same doctrines. His superiority was striking. The idea dwelt on was the higher character of the internal evidence of Christianity, as addressed to our immediate consciousness of our own wants and the necessity of a religion and a revelation. In a style not to me clear or intelligible Irving and Coleridge both declaimed. The *advocatus diaboli* for the evening was Mr. Taylor, who, in a way very creditable to his manners as a gentleman, but with little more than verbal cleverness, and an ordinary logic, and the confidence of a young man who has no suspicion of his own deficiencies, affirmed that those evidences which the Christian thinks he finds in his internal convictions, the Mahometan also thinks he has; and he affirmed that Mahomet had improved the condition of mankind. Lamb asked him whether he came in a turban or a hat." This story of Taylor (Henry Taylor, afterwards the author of *Philip van Artevelde*) is told more fully and more amusingly elsewhere. It seems that Taylor, when it was time to go, could not find his hat. During the search Lamb remarked, "I thought you came in a turban."

"On my walk with Lamb," Robinson continues, "he spoke with enthusiasm of Manning, . . . the most *wonderful* man he ever knew, more extraordinary than Wordsworth or Coleridge. Yet this M. does nothing. He has travelled even in China, and has been by land from India through Thibet, yet, as far

as is known, he has written nothing. Lamb says his criticisms are of the very first quality.

"July 5th :—I . . . took tea at Lamb's. Mr. Irving and his friend, Mr. Carlyle, were there. An agreeable evening enough ; but there is so little sympathy between Lamb and Irving that I do not think they can or ought to be intimate. L. has no respect for I's opinion—perhaps not for his mind. I. ought not to like L. whose levity and want of serious thought is incurable." This was not the visit from Carlyle, then a young man of nearly twenty-nine, which led to the famous passage in his *Diary*, but an earlier. Lamb's attitude to Edward Irving (1792-1834), who was then drawing all London to his chapel in Hatton Garden, was either misunderstood by Robinson or it speedily underwent a change ; for in March, 1825, he writes to Barton : "While I can write, let me adjure you to have no doubts of Irving. Let Mr. Mitford drop his disrespect. Irving has prefixed a dedication (of a Missionary Subject, 1st part) to Coleridge, the most beautiful, cordial and sincere. He there acknowledges his obligation to S. T. C. for his knowledge of Gospel truths, the nature of a Christian Church, etc., to the talk of S. T. C. (at whose Gamaliel feet he sits weekly) [? more] than to that of all the men living. This from him—The great dandled and petted Sectarian—to a religious character so equivocal in the world's Eye as that of S. T. C., so foreign to the Kirk's estimate !—Can this man be a Quack ? The language is as affecting as the Spirit of the Dedication. Some friend [Mrs. Basil Montagu] told him, 'This dedication will do you no good,' *i.e.* not in the world's repute, or with your own People. 'That is a reason for doing it,' quoth Irving. I am thoroughly pleased with him. He is firm, outspeaking, intrepid—and docile as a pupil of Pythagoras. You must like him."

I quote from Crabb Robinson again :—

"July 6 :—Took tea with Lamb. There were Hessey

and Taylor, Clare the shepherd poet, Bowring, and Elton the translator from the classics. Clare looks like a weak man—but he was ill—Elton a sturdy fellow more like a huntsman than a scholar. . . . Hessey gave an account of De Quincey's description of his own bodily sufferings. He should have employed as his publishers, said Lamb, Payne and Fuss" (referring to Payne & Foss, booksellers in Pall Mall).

The Lambs spent their holiday this year in the neighbourhood, making short excursions into Hertfordshire. Writing to an old India House clerk, William Marter, on July 19th, Lamb says: "Pity me, that have been a Gentleman these four weeks, and am reduced in one day to the state of a ready writer. I feel, I feel, my gentlemanly qualities fast oozing away—such as a sense of honour, neckcloths twice a day, abstinence from swearing, &c. The desk enters into my soul."

A letter to Hood at Hastings, on August 10th, has high spirits: "My old New River has presented no extraordinary novelties lately; but there Hope sits every day, speculating upon traditionary gudgeons. I think she has taken the fisheries. I now know the reason why our forefathers were denominated East and West Angles. Yet is there no lack of spawn; for I wash my hands in fishets that come through the pump every morning thick as motelings,—little things o o o, like *that*, that perish untimely, and never taste the brook. . . . You should also go to No. 13, Standgate Street,—a baker, who has the finest collection of marine monsters in ten sea-counties,—sea dragons, polypi, mer-people, most fantastic. You have only to name the old gentleman in black (not the Devil) that lodged with him a week (he'll remember) last July, and he will show courtesy. He is by far the foremost of the savans. His wife is the funniest thwarting little animal! They are decidedly the Lions of green Hastings. [This was a practical joke. There

was no such house in Hastings.] . . . I design to give up smoking ; but I have not yet fixed upon the equivalent vice. I must have *quid pro quo ;* or *quo pro quid.*"

A month or so later, when sending Barton some Album Verses for his daughter, Lamb is "maddish" again, in that irresponsible strain which no one has had in such perfection as he. "I began on another sheet of paper, and just as I had penn'd the second line of Stanza 2 an ugly Blot [*here is a blot*] as big as this fell, to illustrate my counsel.—I am sadly given to blot, and modern blotting-paper gives no redress ; it only smears and makes it worse, as for example [*here is a smear*]. The only remedy is scratching out, which gives it a Clerkish look. The most innocent blots are made with red ink, and are rather ornamental. [*Here are two or three blots in red ink.*] Marry, they are not always to be distinguished from the effusions of a cut finger.

"Well, I hope and trust thy Tick doleru, or however you spell it, is vanished, for I have frightful impressions of that Tick, and do altogether hate it, as an unpaid score, or the Tick of a Death Watch. I take it to be a species of Vitus's dance (I omit the Sanctity, writing to 'one of the men called Friends'). I knew a young Lady who could dance no other, she danced thro' life, and very queer and fantastic were her steps. Heaven bless thee from such measures, and keep thee from the Foul Fiend, who delights to lead after False Fires in the night, Flibbertigibit, that gives the web and the pin &c. I forget what else.—

"From my den, as Bunyan has it, 30 Sep. 24."

In September *Elia* was resumed, with "Blakesmoor in H——shire," and thereafter Lamb for a while worked for the *London Magazine* steadily once more.

On November 2nd he thanks Mrs. Collier for a pig. "To say it was young, crisp, short, luscious, dainty-toed, is but to say what all its predecessors have been.

It was eaten on Sunday and Monday, and doubts only exist as to which temperature it eat best, hot or cold. I incline to the latter. The Petty-feet made a pretty surprising præ-gustation for supper on Saturday night, just as I was loathingly in expectation of bren-cheese. I spell as I speak.

"I do not know what news to send you. You will have heard of Alsager's death,[1] and your Son John's success in the Lottery. I say he is a wise man, if he leaves off while he is well. The weather is wet to weariness, but Mary goes puddling about a-shopping after a gown for the winter. She wants it good & cheap. Now I hold that no good things are cheap, pig-presents always excepted. In this mournful weather I sit moping, where I now write, in an office dark as Erebus, jammed in between 4 walls, and writing by Candlelight, most melancholy. Never see the light of the Sun six hours in the day, and am surprised to find how pretty it shines on Sundays. I wish I were a Caravan driver or a Penny post man, to earn my bread in air & sunshine."

On November 11th Lamb congratulates Procter on his marriage to Anne Skepper, Basil Montagu's stepdaughter, who became the wittiest of old ladies. He adds characteristically : "I am married myself—to a severe step-wife, who keeps me, not at bed and board, but at desk and board, and is jealous of my morning aberrations. I cannot slip out to congratulate kinder unions. It is well she leaves me alone o' nights—the damn'd Day-hag BUSINESS. She is even now peeping over me to see I am writing no Love Letters. I come, my dear—Where is the Indigo Sale Book ? "

Crabb Robinson again :—

"Dec. 5, Sunday :—Walked back to Islington and met there with Mr. and Mrs. Talfourd and Miss Mitford, the dramatist and poet, a squat person but with a

[1] A matter of lie, explained later in the letter.

benevolent and intelligent smile. Scarcely any conversation. Lamb merry.

"Dec. 10 :—At ten went to Talfourd's, where were Haydon and his wife and Lamb and his sister. A very pleasant chat with them. Miss Mitford there, pleasing looks but no words." Mary Russell Mitford (1787-1855) was at this time in the flush of the success of *Our Village*, the first series of which was published in 1824. There are a few glimpses of Lamb in her correspondence. Writing to Sir William Elford, concerning *Our Village*, in March, 1824, she says : "Charles Lamb (the matchless 'Elia' of the *London Magazine*) says that nothing so fresh and characteristic has appeared for a long while. It is not over modest to say this ; but who would not be proud of the praise of such a *proser* ?" Miss Mitford had the highest admiration of Lamb. "By the by," she writes to Elford in 1822, "do you ever see the *London Magazine* ? Charles Lamb's articles, signed Elia, are incomparably the finest specimens of English prose in the language. The humour is as delicate as Addison's, and far more piquant."

The last letters of the year are to Leigh Hunt and Barton. That to Hunt, in Genoa, is chiefly a mendacious account of the conversion of the Novello family to Wesleyanism ; but among the serious news is this : "Mary, my sister, has worn me out with eight weeks' cold and toothache, her average complement in the winter ; and it will not go away. She is otherwise well, and reads novels all day long. She has had an exempt year, a good year ; for which, forgetting the minor calamity, she and I are most thankful."

With Barton Lamb is also in a mischievous mood. Henry Fauntleroy, the banker and forger, had been executed on November 30th. Barton being in a sense also a banker, Lamb wrote to him thus on December 1st : "And now, my dear Sir, trifling apart, the gloomy catastrophe of yesterday morning prompts a sadder

vein. The fate of the unfortunate Fauntleroy makes me, whether I will or no, to cast reflecting eyes around on such of my friends as by a parity of situation are exposed to a similarity of temptation. My very style, seems to myself to become more impressive than usual, with the change of theme. Who that standeth, knoweth but he may yet fall? Your hands as yet, I am most willing to believe, have never deviated into others' property. You think it impossible that you could ever commit so heinous an offence. But so thought Fauntleroy once; so have thought many besides him, who at last have expiated, as he hath done. You are as yet upright. But you are a Banker, at least the next thing to it. I feel the delicacy of the subject; but cash must pass thro' your hands, sometimes to a great amount. If in an unguarded hour —— but I will hope better. Consider the scandal it will bring upon those of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged, that would be indifferent to the fate of a Presbyterian, or an Anabaptist. Think of the effect it would have on the sale of your poems alone; not to mention higher considerations. I tremble, I am sure, at myself, when I think that so many poor victims of the Law at one time of their life made as sure of never being hanged as I in my presumption am too ready to do myself. What are we better than they? Do we come into the world with different necks? Is there any distinctive mark under our left ears? are we unstrangulable? I ask you. Think of these things. I am shocked sometimes at the shape of my own fingers, not for their resemblance to the ape tribe (which is something) but for the exquisite adaptation of them to the purposes of picking, fingering, &c. No one that is so framed, I maintain it, but should tremble."

This was the letter—so Edward FitzGerald tells us—which Thackeray put to his forehead with the words "Saint Charles!" Why it should have so moved

Thackeray to that exclamation may always have puzzled some readers. That it should have prompted him to an impulsive utterance of thankfulness for such good fooling, is natural; but why—just then—the word "saint"? The original letter perhaps gives the key. On the other side of the paper, written painstakingly in a very minute hand (with the two lines of verse in alternate red and black inks), is this pretty passage :—

"Postscript for your Daughter's eyes only.

"Dear Miss—Your pretty little letterets make me ashamed of my great straggling coarse handwriting. I wonder where you get pens to write so small. Sure they must be the pinions of a small wren, or a robin. If you write so in your Album, you must give us glasses to read by. I have seen a Lady's similar book all writ in following fashion. I think it pretty and fanciful.

> "O how I love in early dawn
> To bend my steps o'er flowery dawn [? lawn].

Which I think has an agreeable variety to the eye. Which I recommend to your notice, with friend Elia's best wishes."

It is not much; and yet the thought behind these few lines, and the care with which they were inscribed, are not common possessions; so uncommon, in fact, as to belong only to very sweet-souled persons; or, if one prefers, to saints. Thackeray, when he laid this letter to his forehead and exclaimed "Saint Charles," had full reason. Assisted by this charming little message to Bernard Barton's daughter (which must have meant so much to her), all Lamb's life passed, maybe, before him in a flash—its goodness and kindliness, its disappointments and sorrows; and, most of all, perhaps, his quickness to do little things for others. "Saint Charles" becomes very clear then.

CHAPTER XLII

The Release

1825

Emancipation a Possibility—Harrison Ainsworth—*The Spirit of the Age*—Hazlitt on Lamb Again—Emancipation Realised—"The Superannuated Man"—Lamb at the East India House—Fellow Clerks—John Chambers' Stories—In the Stocks at Barnet—Ogilvie's Stories—The Burdens of Leisure.

WE now come to the last important year in Lamb's life, the year of his emancipation. For some time he had been in poor health ; for a longer time he had been restless and worn by the routine of office work. His position in the East India House, though not exalted, had become remunerative : in 1821 his salary had risen to £700, and just before his retirement, that is to say some time in the winter of 1824-25, it was raised to £730 ; but he was weary, and the dream of retiring on a pension, having once been indulged, haunted him. Fortunately the Directors of the East India House were sympathetic.

With 1825 the *London Magazine*, which had been declining not only in interest but popularity, made another attempt to recover its lost prestige ; but again Taylor's want of acumen rendered the effort abortive. Such advantage as might have been gained by inspiring Lamb and others to new vigour was lost by raising the price to half a crown. Lamb's readers, however, gained by such fantasies as the "Letter to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been Neglected" (written some time earlier—a parody of De Quincey), the fine open Letter to Unitarians, and the spurious lives of Liston and Munden, in his best vein of grave

nonsense. Lamb also wrote "Barbara S." at this time, the narrative, exquisitely handled, of an experience of Fanny Kelly when a child.

The first letter of any importance in 1825 is to Manning, mentioning that Lamb has seen Sir George Tuthill, the physician and his old friend, who has done for him what may

> "To all my nights and days to come
> Give solely sovran sway and masterdom."

—in other words, has communicated with the East India Company concerning Lamb's health. And to Barton on February 10th, he says, "O that I were kicked out of Leadenhall with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob!"

Crabb Robinson's *Diary* has these entries :—

"Jan. 2, 1825 :—I had a fine walk to Lamb's. There I read to him his article on Liston : a pretended life. . . . It will be ill received, and if taken seriously by Liston cannot be defended." Lamb had a particular fondness for this piece of fiction. He told Miss Hutchinson, "Of all the lies I ever put off, I value this most."

"Jan. 6, 1825 :—Took tea with Antony Robinson. The Lambs had shut themselves up, fearing a call from young Godwin, and expressing great regret that I was by mistake not let in.

"Jan. 7, 1825 :—Called on Lamb and chatted. He has written in the *New Times* an article against visitors. He means to express his feelings towards young Godwin, for it is chiefly against the children of old friends that he humorously vents his spleen. I have since read the article. It is pleasant. Not so his pretended biography of Liston." The article in question was the first of a series signed Lepus (the hare with too many friends) which were printed in the *New Times*.

"Feb. 9, 1825 :—Walked to Lamb's. Mr. Dibdin Jr. there, grandson of the song-maker. Also a forward-

talking young man, a Mr. Ainsworth, introduced to Mr. Lamb as a great admirer of his. He will be a pleasant man enough when the obtrusiveness of youth is worn away a little." This was William Harrison Ainsworth, the novelist, with whom Lamb had already had a slight correspondence and who had dedicated to Lamb his second book, *The Works of Cheviot Tichburne*. Ainsworth, who was then just twenty, was working at law in the Inner Temple; he shortly afterwards opened a publishing business in Bond Street, which, however, was only a brief experiment. In 1831 he began his career as a novelist, with *Rookwood*.

On February 10th, his fiftieth birthday, in writing to Barton, Lamb refers to Hazlitt's appreciation of Elia in *The Spirit of the Age*, just published: "He has laid on too many colours on my likeness, but I have had so much injustice done me in my own name, that I make a rule of accepting as much over-measure to Elia as gentlemen think proper to bestow." Hazlitt, in that interesting work, wrote charmingly of his old friend: "How notably he embalms a battered *beau*; how delightfully an amour, that was cold forty years ago, revives in his pages! With what well-disguised humour he introduces us to his relations, and how freely he serves up his friends! Certainly, some of his portraits are *fixtures*, and will do to hang up as lasting and lively emblems of human infirmity. Then there is no one who has so sure an ear for 'the chimes at midnight,' not even excepting Mr. Justice Shallow; nor could Master Silence himself take his 'cheese and pippins' with a more significant and satisfactory air. With what a gusto Mr. Lamb describes the inns and courts of law, the Temple and Gray's-Inn, as if he had been a student there for the last two hundred years, and had been as well acquainted with the person of Sir Francis Bacon as he is with his portrait or writings! It is hard to say whether St. John's Gate is connected with more intense and authentic associations in his

mind, as a part of old London Wall, or as the frontispiece (time out of mind) of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He haunts Watling Street like a gentle spirit; the avenues to the play-houses are thick with panting recollections, and Christ's-Hospital still breathes the balmy breath of infancy in his description of it! Whittington and his Cat are a fine hallucination for Mr. Lamb's historic Muse, and we believe he never heartily forgave a certain writer who took the subject of Guy Faux out of his hands. The streets of London are his fairy-land, teeming with wonder, with life and interest to his retrospective glance, as it did to the eager eye of childhood; he has contrived to weave its tritest traditions into a bright and endless romance!

"Mr. Lamb's taste in books is also fine, and it is peculiar. It is not the worse for a little *idiosyncrasy*. He does not go deep into the Scotch novels, but he is at home in Smollett and Fielding. He is little read in Junius or Gibbon, but no man can give a better account of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, of Sir Thomas Brown's Urn-Burial, or Fuller's Worthies, or John Bunyan's Holy War. No one is more unimpressible to a specious declamation; no one relishes a recondite beauty more. His admiration of Shakespear and Milton does not make him despise Pope; and he can read Parnell with patience, and Gay with delight. His taste in French and German literature is somewhat defective: nor has he made much progress in the science of Political Economy or other abstruse studies, though he has read vast folios of controversial divinity, merely for the sake of the intricacy of style, and to save himself the pain of thinking. . . .

"There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners; and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian head, full of dumb eloquence! Mr. Lamb is a general favourite with those who know him. His character is equally singular and amiable. He is endeared to

his friends not less by his foibles than his virtues ; he insures their esteem by the one, and does not wound their self-love by the other. He gains ground in the opinion of others, by making no advance in his own."

Another of Hazlitt's references to Lamb may be quoted here, partly because it is practically unknown. It occurs in a footnote to an article on Southey in his *Political Essays*, 1819, and refers also to Leigh Hunt : " This article falls somewhat short of its original destination, by our having been forced to omit two topics, the praise of Bonaparte, and the abuse of poetry. The former we leave to history : the latter we have been induced to omit from our regard to two poets of our acquaintance. We must say they have spoiled sport. One of them has tropical blood in his veins, which gives a gay, cordial, vinous spirit to his whole character. The other is a mad wag,—who ought to have lived at the Court of Horwendillus, with Yorick and Hamlet,—equally desperate in his mirth and his gaiety, who would laugh at a funeral and weep at a wedding, who talks nonsense to prevent the headache, who would wag his finger at a skeleton, whose jests scald like tears, who makes a joke of a great man, and a hero of a cat's paw. . . ." This may be capped by still another unfamiliar criticism of Lamb from Hazlitt's mouth. In the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1830, in an article entitled "My Recollections of William Hazlitt," signed J. B. (possibly James Barnes or John Black), it is written : " When I first knew Charles Lamb, I ventured one evening to say something that I intended should pass for wit. ' Ha ! very well ; very well, indeed ! ' said he, ' Ben Jonson has said worse things,' (I brightened up, but he went stammering on to the end of the sentence)—and—and—and—*better* ! ' A pinch of snuff concluded this compliment, which put a stop to my wit for the evening. I related the thing to Hazlitt, afterwards, who laughed. ' Ay,'

said he, ' you are never sure of him till he gets to the end. His jokes would be the sharpest things in the world, but that they are blunted by his good-nature. He wants malice—which is a pity.' ' But,' said I, ' his words at first seemed so——' ' Oh ! as for that,' replied Hazlitt, ' his sayings are generally like women's letters ; all the pith is in the postscript.' "

On February 27th Robinson has this : " Concluded the day by a call on Lamb. Manning &c. there, also Martin Burney whom I had not seen for a long time. He has brought his parliamentary Index to a close and has now to look out for a new occupation, for the law seems to offer no favourable prospect to him." On March 1st Lamb writes a note of sympathy to Miss Hutchinson on the death of her cousin, Thomas Monkhouse : " No one more than Robinson and we acknowledged the nobleness and worth of what we have lost."

An entry in the Court Minutes of the East India Company gives us the next step towards Lamb's liberty : " A letter from Mr. Charles Lamb, dated the 7th instant [February], stating that he has served as a Clerk in the Accountants' Office for a period of nearly 33 years ; enclosing medical certificates of the declining state of his health ; and requesting permission to retire from the service under the provisions of the Act of the 53 Geo. 3, cap. 155, being read : Ordered That the said Letter be referred to the Committee of Accounts to examine and report."

Writing to Barton on March 23rd Lamb says, " I am sick of hope deferred. The grand wheel is in agitation that is to turn up my Fortune, but round it rolls and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of Freedom, of becoming a Gentleman at large, but I am put off from day to day. I have offered my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. Eight weeks am I kept in this fearful suspence. Guess what an absorbing stake I feel it. I am not conscious of the existence

of friends present or absent. The East India Directors alone can be that thing to me—or not. I have just learn'd that nothing will be decided this week. Why the next? Why any week? It has fretted me into an itch of the fingers: I rub 'em against paper, and write to you, rather than not allay this Scorbuta."

The suspense was to endure only for six more days. On March 29th we find the following minute in the Company's books: "At a Court of Directors held on Tuesday 29th March 1825 . . . resolved that the resignation of Mr. Charles Lamb of the Accountant General's office, on account of certified ill health, be accepted, and it appearing that he has served the Company faithfully for 33 years, and is now in the receipt of an income of £730 per annum, he be allowed a pension of £450 . . . per annum . . . to commence from this date."

Thus, on Tuesday, March 29th, Lamb received his freedom and returned to Islington a gentleman at large.

On his way he dropped this note into Robinson's letter box—"I have left the d——d India House for Ever! Give me great joy."

To Barton and Miss Hutchinson he wrote more fully, and to Wordsworth, a week after the event, he said: "I have been several times meditating a letter to you concerning the good thing which has befallen me, but the thought of poor Monkhouse came across me. He was one that I had exulted in the prospect of congratulating me. He and you were to have been the first participators, for indeed it has been ten weeks since the first motion of it.

"Here I am then after 33 years slavery, sitting in my own room at 11 o'Clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with £441 a year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his annuity and starved at 90. £441, i.e. £450, with a deduction of £9 for a provision secured to my

sister, she being survivor, the Pension guaranteed by Act Georgii Tertii, &c.[1]

"I came home for ever on Tuesday in last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelm'd me. It was like passing from life into Eternity. Every year to be as long as three, i.e. to have three times as much real time, time that is my own, in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holydays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys: their conscious fugitiveness—the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holyday, there are no holydays. I can sit at home in rain or shine without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master, as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us.

"Leigh Hunt and Montgomery after their releasements describe the shock of their emancipation much as I feel mine. But it hurt their frames. I eat, drink, and sleep sound as ever. I lay no anxious schemes for going hither and thither, but take things as they occur. Yesterday I excursioned 20 miles, to day I write a few letters. Pleasuring was for fugitive play days, mine are fugitive only in the sense that life is fugitive. Freedom and life co-existent." To Barton Lamb said, "I would not serve another 7 years for seven hundred thousand pounds!" and to Miss Hutchinson, "I would not go back to my prison for seven years longer for £10,000 a year."

[1] Lamb (W. C. Hazlitt records) had contributed to the Regular Widows' Fund from its first establishment, April 1st, 1816, till his death, a sum of £203 19s. 1d., in consideration of which the directors, on March 9th, 1835, resolved to settle on his sister, Mary Lamb, an annuity for her life of £120, she having already, under her brother's will, an income of £90 a year.

In the *Elia* essay " The Superannuated Man " Lamb describes his feelings with more particularity. I quote a passage at the close : " I have been fain to go among them once or twice since ; to visit my old desk-fellows —my co-brethren of the quill—that I had left below in the state militant. Not all the kindness with which they received me could quite restore to me that pleasant familiarity, which I had heretofore enjoyed among them. We cracked some of our old jokes, but methought they went off but faintly. My old desk ; the peg where I hung my hat, were appropriated to another. I knew it must be, but I could not take it kindly. D——l take me, if I did not feel some remorse—beast, if I had not,—at quitting my old compeers, the faithful partners of my toils for six and thirty years, that smoothed for me with their jokes and conundrums the ruggedness of my professional road. Had it been so rugged then after all ? or was I a coward simply ? Well, it is too late to repent ; and I also know, that these suggestions are a common fallacy of the mind on such occasions. But my heart smote me. I had violently broken the bands betwixt us. It was at least not courteous. I shall be some time before I get quite reconciled to the separation. Farewell, old cronies, yet not for long, for again and again I will come among ye, if I shall have your leave. Farewell Ch[ambers], dry, sarcastic, and friendly ! Do[dwell], mild, slow to move, and gentlemanly ! Pl[umley], officious to do, and to volunteer, good services !—and thou, thou dreary pile, fit mansion for a Gresham or a Whittington of old, stately House of Merchants ; with thy labyrinthine passages, and light-excluding, pent-up offices, where candles for one half the year supplied the place of the sun's light ; unhealthy contributor to my weal, stern fosterer of my living, farewell ! In thee remain, and not in the obscure collection of some wandering bookseller, my ' works ! ' There let them rest, as I do from my labours, piled on thy massy

shelves, more MSS. in folio than ever Aquinas left, and full as useful! My mantle I bequeath among ye."

Mr. William Foster, writing in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January, 1897, tells us all that there is to know of Lamb's duties at the East India House. "It must be remembered," he says, "that at the period of Lamb's service the Company was still a vast trading concern. Indigo and tea, drugs and piece-goods poured in a great stream into its warehouses, and were disposed of periodically at the auctions held in the sale-room of the India House. The accounts relating to this multifarious business passed through the department of which Lamb was a member. Hence his references to auditing warehousekeepers' accounts; to 'doing' the deposits on cotton-wool; to making out warrants; to the 'Indigo Appendix,' and to a tea-sale which he had just attended, in which the entry of notes, deposits, &c., had fallen, as usual, mostly to his share. . . . The office in which this business was transacted was on the first floor, probably, though this is uncertain, one of the rooms which looked into a dingy courtyard. There, from ten in the morning until he went to dine at his chop-house, punctually at one o'clock, and again from his return until four o'clock struck, he was to be found for eleven months out of the twelve. Probably from the nature of his work, he seems never to have attained the dignity of a separate chamber, but occupied a seat in a large room open to the public. At this desk, amidst continual interruptions, he scribbled in spare moments most of his private letters."

It is a pity beyond appraisement that Lamb did not write of the India House clerks in the way that he wrote of those at the South-Sea House. But he was too near in point of time; and his personal relations with the House never wholly ceased, since after his superannuation he journeyed down to Leadenhall Street regularly to collect his dues. We have thus no

glimpse of his companions in the compound of the Accountant's Office beyond occasional references in his letters and one or two anecdotes that have come to us from other clerks. The most communicative of these colleagues was John Chambers, with whom Lamb corresponded, although only one letter has survived.

Chambers's recollections were contributed to *Macmillan's Magazine* for February, 1879, by Mr. Algernon Black, his executor. The stories bring out Lamb's freakishness very vividly. For example, on one occasion he "was observed to enter the office hastily and in an excited manner, assumed no doubt for the occasion, and to leave by an opposite door. He appeared no more that day. He stated the next morning, in explanation, that as he was passing through Leadenhall Market on his way to the Office he accidentally trod on a butcher's heel. 'I apologised,' said Lamb, 'to the butcher, but the latter retorted: "Yes, but your excuses won't cure my broken heel, and —— me," said he, seizing his knife, "I'll have it out of you."' Lamb fled from the butcher, and in dread of his pursuit dared not remain for the rest of the day at the India House. This story was accepted as a humorous excuse for taking a holiday without leave.

"An unpopular head of a department came to Lamb one day and inquired, 'Pray, Mr. Lamb, what are you about?' 'Forty, next birthday,' said Lamb. 'I don't like your answer,' said his chief. 'Nor I your question,' was Lamb's reply." The story bears relationship to Lamb's famous answer to the remark of a superior official, "I notice, Mr. Lamb, that you come very late every morning"—"Yes, but see how early I go."

Further information concerning John Chambers and the India House is given in W. C. Hazlitt's book, *The Lambs*: "One of the clerks occasionally kept a couple of hounds under his desk. Another who, like Chambers, rode on horseback to the office, missed his animal

one day, and Lamb threw out a sly hint that Chambers knew something about the affair, so that the latter was watched, wherever he went, by two Bow Street runners, till the owner was told that his property had been seen in a stable in the north of London; and there he duly found it, and had to pay a fortnight's bait." One remark of Lamb, handed down by Chambers, is that he thought he must be the only man in England who had never worn boots or mounted a horse.

John Chambers was the son of the Rev. Thomas Chambers, Vicar of Radway, near Edgehill, who, according to Lamb's essay "Thoughts on Presents of Game," had the sensible culinary habit of allowing a pound of Epping to every hare. He died in 1862, aged seventy-three. With his brother Charles Chambers Lamb also corresponded; but only one letter, a very high-spirited eulogy of fish, has been preserved.

Other clerks who have left memories of Lamb are Brook Pulham, who etched the caricature of *Elia*, and Mr. Ogilvie. The late Mr. Swinburne (who idolised Lamb) possessed an interleaved copy of Wither privately printed by John Mathew Gutch with notes by Lamb. On the fly-leaf of the book, which was given by Lamb to Pulham, is the record in Pulham's hand of a frolic in which Lamb and himself were involved one Sunday morning in 1809. It seems to have been at Barnet, and the upshot of it was that Lamb was placed in the stocks for brawling during divine service. Lamb's own story of the escapade, printed in the *London Magazine* in April, 1821, as the "Confessions of H. F. V. H. Delamore, Esq.," was first identified by the late Bertram Dobell, the bookseller.

Let no eye look over thee, while thou shalt peruse it, reader! Once——

these legs, with Kent in the play, though for far less ennobling considerations, did wear "cruel garters."

Yet I protest it was but for a thing of nought—a fault of youth, and warmer blood—a calendary inadvertence I may call it—or

rather a temporary obliviousness of the day of the week—timing my Saturnalia amiss.——

Streets of Barnett, infamous for civil broils, ye saw my shame! —did not your Red Rose rise again to dye my burning cheek?

Mr. Ogilvie, whose reminiscences were imparted orally to the Rev. Joseph H. Twichell, and printed in *Scribner's Monthly* for March, 1876, said that for all Lamb's complaints in his letters, he rarely did what could be called a full day's work at the India House, but came late and generally talked a good deal at the desks of his friends. "'When I first entered the India House and was introduced to him, he seized my hand, and exclaimed with an air, "Ah, Lord Ogleby! Welcome, Lord Ogleby![1] Glad to see you! Proud of the honor!"—and he never called me anything else, and that got to be my name among the clerks, and is yet, when I meet any of the few that are left.'

"To sport with the *names* of his fellows, indeed, appeared to have been a characteristic amusement with him. Mr. Ogilvie gave these specimens. There was a clerk named Wawd, distinguished for his stupidity, whom he hit off in this couplet:—

> What Wawd knows, God knows;
> But God knows *what* Wawd knows!

"Another, named Dodwell, he celebrated in a charade, of which the first two lines ran thus:—

> My first is that which infants call their Maker,
> My second is that which is best let alone——

Yet, in spite of his pleasantries of all sorts, his popularity with his fellow-clerks was unbounded. He allowed the same familiarity that he practised, and they all called him 'Charley.'"

Another India House story has it that Lamb, when writing official letters to a Mr. Bensusan, invariably addressed him as "Sir—and Madam."

[1] Lord Ogleby is in *The Clandestine Marriage.*

The East India House is now, like the South-Sea House, a nest of alien offices. From the block, however, which stands in Leadenhall Street, it is not difficult to reconstruct in one's mind the building as Lamb knew it. On September 1st, 1858, the functions of the Company were transferred to the Government, and the ledgers that Lamb kept for so many years—which contained, as he said, his real "Works"—are no more. But the Lamb tradition is still fostered at the new India Office in Whitehall. Some few years ago the portrait of him by Henry Meyer, painted in 1826, was purchased to adorn its walls, and it now hangs over the fireplace in the Revenue Committee Room, bearing the simple inscription :—

Charles Lamb,
Clerk in the India House, 1792-1825,

while a copy of Booth's *Tables of Simple Interest*, 1818, is carefully preserved, on the fly-leaf of which Lamb wrote the following mock reviews :—

"This is a Book of great interest, but does not much engage our sympathy."—Extract from the *Edinburgh Review* for Oct., Nov. and Dec., 1818.

"This is a very interesting publication."—*Gentleman's Mag.* for July, 1819.

"The interest of this book, unlike the generality which we are doomed to peruse, rises to the end."—*British Critic* for Aug., 1820.

In the light of present knowledge we can see that Lamb would have been wiser had he not retired, but, after taking a long holiday for recuperation, returned to his office work and remained in harness all his life. As from time to time he tells his friends, his leisure became a burden to him, aggravated by his remoteness from London and by the circumstance that his sister, who was now getting to be an elderly woman (she was sixty-one at the time of his retirement), grew increasingly ill with each visitation of her malady, thus leaving him with longer and longer periods of

loneliness. No one was less fitted than he to be solitary and unemployed. To be happy and well, he needed a little routine, friends after work and a city environment; whereas instead of this he had nothing to do; for weeks and weeks no company but his own thoughts; and his home either in Islington or in distant Enfield. It is no wonder that his health declined and his frailties increased. When his sister was well; when visitors found their way to his door; when Emma Isola's holidays brought her to the house; when the enthusiasm for work was upon him; Lamb was again himself. But in the nine years and a half yet to run after his emancipation, these alleviations were comparatively uncommon. Too often he was alone, lacking any fixed purpose, sick and dejected. The history of his life between 1825 and 1834 makes sad reading.

In the Popular Fallacy "That we should Rise with the Lark," written in 1826, when he had begun to know some of the burdens of leisure, he expresses very poignantly what I fear were only too frequently his thoughts. It is among his finest pieces of prose. "Therefore, while the busy part of mankind are fast huddling on their clothes, are already up and about their occupations, content to have swallowed their sleep by wholesale; we choose to linger a-bed, and digest our dreams. It is the very time to recombine the wandering images, which night in a confused mass presented; to snatch them from forgetfulness; to shape, and mould them. Some people have no good of their dreams. Like fast feeders, they gulp them too grossly, to taste them curiously. We love to chew the cud of a foregone vision: to collect the scattered rays of a brighter phantasm, or act over again, with firmer nerves, the sadder nocturnal tragedies; to drag into day-light a struggling and half-vanishing night-mare; to handle and examine the terrors, or the airy solaces. We have too much respect for these spiritual communications, to let them go so lightly. We are not so stupid, or so

careless, as that Imperial forgetter of his dreams, that we should need a scer to remind us of the form of them. They seem to us to have as much significance as our waking concerns ; or rather to import us more nearly, as more nearly we approach by years to the shadowy world, whither we are hastening. We have shaken hands with the world's business ; we have done with it ; we have discharged ourself of it. Why should we get up ? we have neither suit to solicit, nor affairs to manage.

"The drama has shut in upon us at the fourth act. We have nothing here to expect, but in a short time a sick bed, and a dismissal. We delight to anticipate death by such shadows as night affords. We are already half acquainted with ghosts. We were never much in the world. Disappointment early struck a dark veil between us and its dazzling illusions. Our spirits showed grey before our hairs. The mighty changes of the world already appear as but the vain stuff out of which dramas are composed. We have asked no more of life than what the mimic images in play-houses present us with. Even those types have waxed fainter. Our clock appears to have struck. We are SUPERANNUATED. In this dearth of mundane satisfaction, we contract politic alliances with shadows. It is good to have friends at court. The abstracted media of dreams seem no ill introduction to that spiritual presence, upon which, in no long time, we expect to be thrown. We are trying to know a little of the usages of that colony ; to learn the language, and the faces we shall meet with there, that we may be the less awkward at our first coming among them. We willingly call a phantom our fellow, as knowing we shall soon be of their dark companionship. Therefore, we cherish dreams. We try to spell in them the alphabet of the invisible world ; and think we know already, how it shall be with us. Those uncouth shapes, which, while we clung to flesh and blood, affrighted us, have

become familiar. We feel attenuated into their meagre essences, and have given the hand of half-way approach to incorporeal being. We once thought life to be something; but it has unaccountably fallen from use before its time. Therefore we choose to dally with visions. The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?"

Lamb, wise for other persons with an almost unerring wisdom, was (like many a good adviser) a poor counsellor to himself, and in addition was rarely, if ever, a free agent. He was pledged to his sister. It may have seemed to him that her interests, as much as his own health, demanded his release from the East India House; it certainly seemed to him that she was likely to be in a better state in the country than in London. Their lives were woven in one piece. Upon the tragedy of Mary Lamb depended the tragedy of Charles Lamb. It was decreed that her malady should sap his later years.

CHAPTER XLIII

After the Release

1825 (*Continued*)

Lamb Ill—Enter William Hone—The Two Snuff-boxes—Barry Cornwall's Rhyming Epistle—Last Contribution to the *London Magazine*—An Evening with Lamb and Coleridge.

ON April 22nd, 1825, Crabb Robinson records that Lamb is more calmly cheerful than he has ever known him; and there is talk of travelling abroad. Writing to Dorothy Wordsworth at the end of May, the same friend says: "The expression of his delight has been childlike (in the good sense of that word). . . . M. L. has remained so long well that one might almost advise or rather permit a journey to them. But Lamb has no desire to travel. If he had, few things would give me so much pleasure as to accompany him. I should be proud of taking care of him.

"April 29, 1825:—I called to Lamb's, with whom I found Knowles, the author of 'Virginius,' and of 'William Tell' now coming out. A very Irishman in manners, tho' of the better kind. Seemingly a warmhearted man. No marks of talent in his conversation, but a bold decisive tone. He spoke of William Hazlitt as his friend, and this does not speak for his discretion or moral feeling."

On May 27th Lamb attended the funeral of John Lamb's widow, whose executor he was; and from that moment he seems to have begun to suffer from the reaction which was practically inevitable after what had happened during the year. On June 6th

Robinson writes to Dorothy Wordsworth: "Poor Lamb is very unwell. His illness is however I trust a mere attack on his nerves arising out of what he is so little able to bear—troublesome business. The widow of his late brother is just dead and he is sole executor. The will will give him trouble. And he was harassed during his illness by the necessity of making frequent journeys. I saw him last night and I went to him this morning. Mr. Gillman had been with him and he reports his complaint to be nervous. M. L. would be well were her brother so. Of a visit to you from them there is no chance. M. L. would not go so far for a thousand pounds, she says, and he cannot be happy away from her. Lamb does not encourage any one to offer to take a trip with him—he has a passion for solitude, he says, and hitherto he finds that his retirement from business has not brought leisure." Lamb recovered partially from this attack, although another and more serious one was to come.

Early in July he and his sister joined the Allsops in lodgings at Enfield; meanwhile, although in poor health, he had been well enough to do a little work—a review of Hood and Reynolds's *Odes and Addresses*, and the essay "The Convalescent," a premature account of his recovery, and to take a friendly and helping interest in the *Every-Day Book*. This brings us to William Hone, another acquaintance, whom Lamb had previously known slightly, and to whom Colebrook Cottage was lent while the Lambs were at Enfield.

William Hone cannot be described as a close friend of Lamb. His attitude was rather that of a disciple or dependant, but the acquaintance drew from Lamb some charming scraps of writing. Hone's was the stormy career that belongs to ardent politicians who are on the side of a small minority. Nearly five years younger than Lamb, he was the son of a strict disciplinarian of Bath. At the age of ten he was sent to London to enter an attorney's office; but he picked

up more republicanism than law, and in 1800, having first provided himself with a wife, he commenced bookseller, and for seventeen years he carried on a small business, chequered by bankruptcy, fire and robberies. His family became numerous; he spent much of his money in philanthropic crusades, one of which was directed against ill-managed lunatic asylums, in founding newspapers, and in other pursuits intended for the service of his fellows, but leading invariably to the impoverishment of himself. In 1817 he went farther; turning his attention to politics, he wrote and issued scathing satires on the Government. Among them were *The Sinecurist's Creed*, *The Political Litany* and *The Late John Wilkes's Catechism*, which, with rude but very apposite cuts by George Cruikshank, whom Hone practically discovered, took the town immensely. The form of the squibs was, however, ill chosen, and an action for blasphemy was instituted, based on the fact that the Athanasian Creed, the Litany and the Church Catechism were held up to public ridicule. The Attorney-General prosecuted, Hone defended himself, and Lord Ellenborough presided during two of the three trials, which were held on December 18th, 19th and 20th, 1817. Hone spoke altogether for twenty hours, displaying profound knowledge of English law, and superb courage. Lord Ellenborough summed up against him with impassioned feeling, but Hone was acquitted. The verdict, which was extremely popular, is said to have accelerated Ellenborough's death, which occurred in 1818. Hone became for the moment the people's darling, a public subscription of upwards of £3,000 was raised for him, and he took a new shop on Ludgate Hill and resumed his satirical labours, with a special bias against the Regent.

What Lamb thought of the trial we can only guess; his existing letters say nothing of it; but when in 1823 Hone published his *Ancient Mysteries* and sent

Lamb a copy, Lamb replied asking him to call. Thus, to the best of my knowledge, their acquaintance began. In 1825 Hone issued the first number of his *Every-Day Book*, to be followed by the *Table Book* and the *Year Book*, three collections of folk-lore, antiquarianism, topography and curious matter, upon which his fame rests and will endure for many years. Lamb helped him with advice and contributions, and to the May number of the *London Magazine* for 1825 sent a copy of verses beginning bravely,

I like you and your book, ingenuous Hone.

Hone was delighted. He copied the poem into his periodical and added a reply from his own pen which, I regret to say, rhymed "Elia" to "aspire." It contained these lines :—

I *am* "ingenuous": it is all I can
Pretend to: it is all I wish to be;
Yet, through obliquity of sight in man,
From constant gaze on tortuosity,
Few people understand me: still, I am
Warmly affection'd to each human being;
Loving the right, for right's sake; and, friend Lamb,
Trying to see things as they are; hence, seeing
Some "good in ev'ry thing," however bad,
Evil in many things that look most fair,
And pondering on all. . . .

The first volume of the *Every-Day Book*, when issued in book form in 1826, had the following dedication :—

TO
CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.

DEAR L——

Your letter to me, within the first two months from the commencement of the present work, approving my notice of St. Chad's Well, and your afterwards daring to publish me your "friend," with your "proper name" annexed, I shall never forget. Nor can I forget your and Miss Lamb's sympathy and kindness when glooms outmastered me; and that your pen spontaneously sparkled in the book, when my mind was in clouds and darkness.

These "trifles," as each of you would call them, are benefits scored upon my heart; and

I Dedicate this Volume,
To You and Miss Lamb,
With Affectionate Respect,
W. Hone.

May 5, 1826.

Scattered throughout the books are allusions to Lamb's work, informed by the warmest enthusiasm.

In 1826 Hone's affairs, in spite of the public subscription, were in so sad a state that he was consigned to the King's Bench, where he lived (within the prison rules, at Southwark,) for three years, carrying on his editorial work as before. In 1827 Lamb still assisted him—all his letters, enclosing Garrick extracts and other material for the *Table Book*, being addressed to Hone in his harbour of refuge. After quitting the King's Bench Hone again sank into difficulties, and in 1830, as we shall see, it was decided by his friends, among whom Lamb seems to have been the moving spirit, to establish the unfortunate satirist in a business of a more trustworthy character than bookselling. He was therefore placed in a coffee-house in Gracechurch Street; but without success. His remaining years were given to literary work and Evangelical religion (he was converted by Edward Irving), and he died in 1842. Dickens and Cruikshank were at his funeral.

In a letter from Hone printed in a pamphlet entitled *Some Account of the Conversion of the Late William Hone*, 1853, I find the following pleasant story: "One summer's evening I was walking on Hampstead Heath with Charles Lamb, and we had talked ourselves into a philosophic contempt of our slavery to the habit of snuff-taking, and with the firm resolution of never again taking a single pinch, we threw our snuff boxes away from the hill on which we stood, far among the furze and brambles below, and went home in triumph; I began to be very miserable, was wretched all night;

in the morning I was walking on the same hill, I saw Charles Lamb below, searching among the bushes; he looked up laughing, and saying, 'What, you are come to look for your snuff box too!' 'O no,' said I taking a pinch out of a paper in my waistcoat pocket, 'I went for a halfpenny worth to the first shop that was open.'"

Writing to Southey on August 10th, from the house at Enfield which he shared with Allsop, Lamb says that he has a "one-act farce going to be acted at the Haymarket; but when? is the question"—a reference to "The Pawnbroker's Daughter," which was, however, in two acts, and was never performed—fortunately, I think, for its author's peace of mind. "Mary," Lamb says, "walks her twelve miles a day some days, and I my twenty on others."

Lamb also tells Southey the news that the *London Magazine* has fallen, changed publishers, and he will write for it no more. His last contribution was the essay "Stage Illusion" in the August number. In the previous number had been printed Procter's rhymed address "To Charles Lamb. Written over a flask of sherris":—

Dear Lamb, I drink to thee,—to *thee*
Married to sweet Liberty!—

What!—old friend, and *art* thou freed
From the bondage of the pen?
Free from care and toil indeed—
Free to wander amongst men
When and howsoe'er thou wilt,—
All thy drops of labour spilt
On those huge and figured pages,
Which will sleep unclasp'd for ages,
Little knowing who did wield
The quill that traversed their white field?
Come,—another mighty health!
Thou hast earn'd thy sum of wealth,
Countless ease,—immortal leisure,—
Days—and nights of boundless pleasure,

Checquer'd by no dream of pain,
Such as hangs on clerk-like brain
Like a nightmare, and doth press
The happy soul from happiness.

Oh! happy thou,—whose all of time
(Day, and eve, and morning-prime)
Is fill'd with talk on pleasant themes,—
Or visions quaint, which come in dreams
Such as panther'd Bacchus rules,
When his rod is on "the schools,"
Mixing wisdom with their wine;—
Or, perhaps, thy wit so fine
Strayeth in some elder book,
Whereon our modern Solons look
With severe ungifted eyes,
Wondering what thou seest to prize.
Happy thou, whose skill can take
Pleasure at each turn, and slake
Thy thirst by every fountain brink,
Where less wise men would pause to shrink.
Sometimes 'mid stately avenues
With Cowley thou or Marvel's muse
Dost walk,—or Gray, by Eton towers,
Or Pope, in Hampton's chestnut bowers,—
Or Walton, by his loved Lea stream:—
Or, dost thou with our Milton dream
Of Eden, and the Apocalypse,
And hear the words from his great lips?

Speak!—In what grove or hazel shade
For "musing Meditation made,"
Dost wander,—or on Penshurst lawn,
Where Sydney's fame had tide to dawn
And die, ere yet the hate of men
Could envy at his perfect pen?
Or, dost thou in some London street,
With voices fill'd and thronging feet,
Loiter, with mien 'twixt grave and gay—
Or take, along some pathway sweet,
Thy calm suburban way?—
Happy beyond that man of Ross,
Whom mere content could ne'er engross,
Art *thou*,—with hope,—health,—"learned leisure,"
Friends—books—thy thoughts—an endless pleasure!
—Yet—yet—(for when was pleasure made
Sunshine all without a shade?)

Thou, perhaps, as now thou rovest
Through the busy scenes thou lovest
With an idler's careless look,
Turning some moth-pierced book,
Feel'st a sharp and sudden woe
For visions vanished long ago !—
And then thou think'st how time has fled
Over thy unsilver'd head,
Snatching many a fellow mind
Away, and leaving—what—behind ?—
Nought, alas ! save joy and pain
Mingled ever, like a strain
Of music where the discords vie
With the truer harmony.
So, perhaps, with thee the vein
Is sullied ever,—so the chain
Of habits and affections old,
Like a weight of solid gold,
Presseth on thy gentle breast,
Till sorrow rob thee of thy rest.

—Ay : So it is. Ev'n *I* (whose lot
The fairy Love so long forgot)
Seated beside this Sherris wine,
And near to books and shapes divine,
Which poets and the painters past
Have wrought in lines that aye shall last—
Ev'n I, with Shakspeare's self beside me,
And One, whose tender talk can guide me
Through fears, and pains, and troublous themes,—
Whose smile doth fall upon my dreams
Like sunshine on a stormy sea,—
Want *something*,—when I think of *thee* !

May 25, 1825.

Almost immediately on returning to Colebrook Cottage from Enfield, Lamb suffered a relapse—another nervous breakdown aggravated by sleeplessness. On September 24th he tells Allsop that he is better, but that Mary Lamb has been taken ill again, her first attack since 1823. Writing to Dorothy Wordsworth on November 2nd, Crabb Robinson describes Lamb as a " distressing object," suffering both from his own illness and anxiety for his sister. But on December 5th Lamb is able to tell Allsop that " we are at home

to visitors" once more. Writing to his nephew Edward on December 9th of this year Coleridge says, "I have secured Charles Lamb and Edward Irving to meet you," and he adds that he hopes also for Blanco White

Meanwhile, having lost the *London Magazine*, Lamb had come to terms with Colburn, the publisher of the *New Monthly Magazine*, to which he was to contribute a series of "Popular Fallacies" and anything else that might occur to him. The Fallacies began in the number for January, 1826.

In the *Monthly Repository* for 1835 is a description, signed S. Y., of an evening spent at Colebrook Cottage with the Lambs and Coleridge. The writer was Sarah Flower, afterwards Sarah Adams, a daughter of Benjamin Flower of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, who had published Coleridge's "Ode on the Departing Year" in 1796. The time would be the end of the year 1825. I quote some passages.[1] "The character of Charles Lamb's person was in total contrast to that of Coleridge. His strongly-marked, deeply-lined face, furrowed more by feeling than age, like an engraving by Blake, where every line told its separate story, or like a finely chiselled head done by some master in marble, where every touch of the chisel marked some new attribute. Yet withal there was so much sweetness and playfulness lurking about the corners of the mouth, that it gave to the face the extraordinary character of flexible granite. His figure was small even to spareness. It was as if the soul within, in its constant restless activity, had worn the body to its smallest possibility of existence.

"There was an equal amount of difference in his conversation from that of Coleridge, as there was in his person. It was not one uninterrupted flow, but a periodical production of sentences, short, telling, full of wit, philosophy, at times slightly caustic, though

[1] The paper will be found in full in Bertram Dobell's *Sidelights on Charles Lamb*.

that is too strong a word for satire which was of the most good-natured kind. There was another essential point of difference. In Coleridge might be detected a certain consciousness of being listened to, and at times an evident getting up of phrases, a habit almost impossible to be avoided in a practised conversationalist. In Charles Lamb there was a perfect absence of this; all that he said was choice in its humour, true in its philosophy; but the racy freshness, that was like an atmosphere of country air about it, was better than all; the perfect simplicity, absence of all conceit, child-like enjoyment of his own wit, and the sweetness and benevolence that played about the rugged face, gave to it a charm in no way inferior to the poetical enjoyment derived from the more popular conversation of his friend.

"Another difference might be observed; that Coleridge's metaphysics seemed based in the study of his own individual nature more than the nature of others, while Charles Lamb seemed not for a moment to rest on self, but to throw his whole soul into the nature of circumstances and things around him. These differences served only to heighten the enjoyment of witnessing the long-enduring genuine friendship existing between the two,—the three (for why should 'Mary' be excluded?)—wrought out of mingling sympathies and felicitous varieties. In Charles Lamb, as in Coleridge, at times there was a melancholy in the face which partook of the nature of his individual character. It was not dissatisfaction; it was not gloom: but it seemed to say that he had had more affection, more gushing tenderness of feeling, than he had met with objects on whom to expend it. . . .

"Coleridge, on the evening in question, spoke of death with fear; not from the dread of punishment, not from the shrinking from physical pain, but he said he had a horror lest, after the attempt to 'shuffle off this mortal coil,' he should yet 'be thrown back upon

himself.' Charles Lamb kept silence, and looked sceptical; and, after a pause, said suddenly, 'One of the things that made me question the particular inspiration they ascribed to Jesus Christ was his ignorance of the character of Judas Iscariot. Why did not he and his disciples kick him out for a rascal, instead of receiving him as a disciple?' Coleridge smiled very quietly, and then spoke of some person (name forgotten) who had been making a comparison between himself and Wordsworth as to their religious faith 'They said, although I was an atheist, we were upon a par, for that Wordsworth's Christianity was very like Coleridge's atheism; and Coleridge's atheism was very like Wordsworth's Christianity.'

"After some time, he moved round the room to read the different engravings that hung upon the walls One, over the mantel-piece, especially interested his fancy. There were only two figures in the picture, both women. One was of a lofty, commanding stature, with a high intellectual brow, and of an abbess-like deportment. She was standing in grave majesty, with the finger uplifted, in the act of monition to a young girl beside her. The face was in profile, and somewhat severe in its expression; but this was relieved by the richness and grace of the draperies in which she was profusely enveloped. The girl was in the earliest and freshest spring of youth, lovely and bright, with a somewhat careless and inconsiderate air, and she seemed but half inclined to heed the sage advice of her elder companion. She held in her hand a rose, with which she was toying, and had she been alive you would have expected momentarily to see it taken between the taper fingers and scattered in wilful profusion. Coleridge uttered an expression of admiration, and then, as if talking to himself, apostrophised in some such words as these: 'There she stands, with the world all before her: to her it is as a fairy dream, a vision of unmingled joy. To her it is as is that lovely flower,

which woos her by its bright hue and fragrant perfume. Poor child! must thou too be reminded of the thorns that lurk beneath? Turn thee to thy monitress! she bids thee clasp not too closely pleasures that lure but to wound thee. Look into her eloquent eyes; listen to her pleading voice; her words are words of wisdom; garner them up in thy heart; and when the evil days come, the days in which thou shalt say "I find no pleasure in them," remember her as thus she stood, and, with uppointing finger, bade thee think of the delights of heaven—that heaven which is ever ready to receive the returning wanderer to its rest.' [1]

"He spoke of the effect of different sounds upon his sensations; said, of all the pains the sense of hearing ever brought to him, that of the effect made by a dog belonging to some German conjurer was the greatest. The man pretended that the dog would answer, 'Ich bedanke mein herr' when anything was given to it; and the effort and contortion made by the dog to produce the required sound, proved that the scourge,

[1] I quote Coleridge's apostrophe and the description of the picture because it is an indication of how little either Coleridge or S. Y. really knew of their hostess's work. The picture was an engraving of Leonardo da Vinci's "Modestia et Vanitas," on which Mary Lamb had already said, in print, all that was needful, in her "Lines Suggested by a Picture of Two Females by Leonardo da Vinci," included in Lamb's *Works* (which was dedicated to Coleridge) in 1818:—

The lady Blanch, regardless of all her lovers' fears,
To the Urs'line convent hastens, and long the Abbess hears.
"O Blanch, my child, repent ye of the courtly life ye lead."
Blanch looked on a rose-bud and little seem'd to heed.
She looked on the rose-bud, she looked round, and thought
On all her heart had whisper'd, and all the Nun had taught.
"I am worshipped by lovers, and brightly shines my fame,
"All Christendom resoundeth the noble Blanch's name.
"Nor shall I quickly wither like the rose-bud from the tree,
"My queen-like graces shining when my beauty's gone from me.
"But when the sculptur'd marble is raised o'er my head,
"And the matchless Blanch lies lifeless among the noble dead
"This saintly lady Abbess hath made me justly fear,
"It nothing will avail me that I were worshipp'd here."

or some similar punishment, had been applied to effect it. In contrast to this was the homage he rendered to the speaking voice of Mrs. Jordan, on which he expatiated in such rapturous terms, as if he had been indebted to it for a sixth sense. He said that it was the exquisite witchery of her tone that suggested an idea in his 'Remorse,' that if Lucifer had had permission to retain his angel voice, hell would have been hell no longer.

"In the course of the evening the talented editor of the *Comic Annual* [Thomas Hood] made his appearance. He was then known only by his Hogarthian caricature of 'The Progress of Cant,' upon which Coleridge complimented him. After some time he introduced many of his etchings, which were then unknown to the world, and they were the means of exciting in Coleridge the first genuine hearty laugh I had seen. If one had not admired entirely, it would have been enough to have made him envied. Laugh after laugh followed as the square tablets (trump cards in the pack of the genius of caricature) were laid upon the table, and a merry game it was for all. The effect was not a little increased by the extreme quietude of their master, who stood by without uttering a word, except with the corners of his mouth, where the rich fund of humour which had furnished the treat we were enjoying, was speaking more intelligibly than any words.

"He went, and the time went, and the supper went; and at last it was time for Coleridge to go too, for he had the walk to Highgate all before him. His friend begged earnestly that he might walk with him, but without avail. There was an affectionate parting, as if they had been boys rather than men, and it seemed to concentrate their lives into that minute. It recalled the meetings and partings of other days; the wanderings by the lakes; the many minglings in social union; a whole host of recollections seemed to crowd

around and enclose them in a magic circle. Coleridge lingered on the threshold, as if he were leaving what had been a part of his heart's home for many years ; and again he who had been his companion in many a mountain ramble, many a stroll 'in dale, forest, and mead, by paved fountain and by rushy brook, and on the beached margent of the sea,' would fain have kept up the old companionship even though it was night, and the way had no such temptations. Another grasp of the hand, and a kiss of affection on Mary's cheek, and he was gone.

"I never saw him again ; and Charles Lamb and his sister but once since ; and that was a few months ago in the street. He had aged considerably, but it scarcely excited melancholy, for Mary was with him like a good guardian angel. They had that same country air freshness about them ; they looked unlike everything around ; there was an elderly respectability about them ; not the modern upstart prig of a word, but the genuine old china, old plate, bright, black, mahogany air, which is now almost departed. I watched them earnestly ; a vague feeling that it was something I should never see again ; and so it has happened."

CHAPTER XLIV

1826

Henry Meyer's Portrait of Lamb—Brook Pulham's Caricature—Enter Edward Moxon—A Party at Leigh Hunt's—Dibdin's Sunday at Hastings—A Task at the British Museum—The Rev. John Mitford at Colebrook Cottage—"Dash."

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX was a very quiet year. Lamb walked much and wrote little; Crabb Robinson's *Diary* has few entries of importance; and the correspondence is for the most part trifling. Edward Moxon seems to have been the only new friend.

Writing to Barton on March 20th Lamb mentions one of the minor disadvantages of leaving the East India House: "You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former, I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend whose stationery is a permanent perquisite: for folding, I shall do it neatly when I learn to tye my neckcloths. I surprise most of my friends by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got past pot-hooks and hangers. Sealing-wax, I have none on my establishment. Wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. When my Epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's, however superior to the Roman in delicate irony, judicious reflexions, etc., his gilt post will bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the E. I. H. I never mended a pen; I now cut 'em to the stumps, marring rather than mending the primitive goose quill. I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. When Adam laid out his first penny upon nonpareils at some stall in Mesopotamos, I think it went hard with him, reflect-

ing upon his old goodly orchard, where he had so many for nothing."

On May 16th, in another letter to Barton, we see Lamb in an untempered East wind : " I have had my head and ears stuff'd up with the East winds. A continual ringing in my brain of bells jangled, or The Spheres touchd by some raw Angel. It is not George 3 trying the 100th psalm ? I get my music for nothing. But the weather seems to be softening, and will thaw my stunnings. Coleridge writing to me a week or two since begins his note—' Summer has set in with its usual Severity.' A cold Summer is all I know of disagreeable in cold. I do not mind the utmost rigour of real Winter, but these smiling hypocrites of Mays wither me to death. My head has been a ringing Chaos, like the day the winds were made, before they submitted to the discipline of a weathercock, before the Quarters were made. In the street, with the blended noises of life about me, I hear, and my head is lightened, but in a room the hubbub comes back, and I am deaf as a Sinner. . . . I chuse a very little bit of paper, for my ear hisses when I bend down to write. I can hardly read a book, for I miss that small soft voice which the idea of articulated words raises (almost imperceptibly to you) in a silent reader. I seem too deaf to see what I read. But with a touch or two of returning Zephyr my head will melt. What Lyes you Poets tell about the May ! It is the most ungenial part of the Year, cold crocuses, cold primroses, you take your blossoms in Ice—a painted Sun—

> Unmeaning joy around appears,
> And Nature smiles as if she sneers.

It is ill with me when I begin to look which way the wind sits. Ten years ago I literally did not know the point from the broad end of the Vane, which it was the [? that] indicated the Quarter."

On May 26th Robinson records that he has called

on Henry Meyer, the artist, in Red Lion Square, to see Lamb's portrait for which he was then sitting. "A strong likeness. It is to be engraved perhaps. It gives L. the air of a thinking man more like the framer of a system of philosophy than of the genial and gay effusions of Elia." The portrait, which has the India House in the background, is now in the possession of the India Office. Henry Meyer, who is best known as an engraver, was a nephew of Hoppner and a pupil of Bartolozzi. He was one of the foundation members (and President in 1828) of the Society of British Artists, at whose exhibition in 1826 his picture of Lamb was shown as a "Portrait of a Gentleman."

According to the published plate, Brook Pulham completed his etched caricature of Elia in 1825; but Lamb did not send it to Coleridge until June 1st, 1826. He then wrote: "If I know myself, nobody more detests the display of personal vanity which is implied in the act of sitting for one's picture than myself. But the fact is, that the likeness which accompanies this letter was stolen from my person at one of my unguarded moments by some too partial artist, and my friends are pleased to think that he has not much flattered me. Whatever its merits may be, you, who have so great an interest in the original, will have a satisfaction in tracing the features of one that has so long esteemed you. There are times when in a friend's absence these graphic representations of him almost seem to bring back the man himself. The painter, whoever he was, seems to have taken me in one of those disengaged moments, if I may so term them, when the native character is so much more honestly displayed than can be possible in the restraints of an enforced sitting attitude. Perhaps it rather describes me as a thinking man, than a man in the act of thought. Whatever its pretensions, I know it will be dear to you, towards whom I should wish my thoughts to flow in a sort of an undress rather than in the more

studied graces of diction." It was this etching which so annoyed Procter that he remonstrated in a passion with the print-seller. Possibly it was not published until 1826, in humorous rivalry with Meyer.

On September 26th, in a letter to Wordsworth, we meet Edward Moxon for the first time: "The Bearer of this is my young friend Moxon, a young lad with a Yorkshire head, and a heart that would do honour to a more Southern county: no offence to Westmoreland. He is one of Longman's best hands, and can give you the best account of The Trade as 'tis now going; or stopping. For my part, the failure of a Bookseller is not the most unpalatable accident of mortality:

> sad but not saddest
> The desolation of a hostile city.

When Constable fell from heaven, and we all hoped Baldwin was next, I tuned a slight stave to the words in Macbeth (D'avenant's) to be sung by a Chorus of Authors,

> What should we do when Booksellers break?
> We should rejoyce.

Moxon is but a tradesman in the bud yet, and retains his virgin Honesty; Esto perpetua, for he is a friendly serviceable fellow, and thinks nothing of lugging up a Cargo of the Newest Novels once or twice a week from the Row to Colebrooke to gratify my Sister's passion for the newest things. He is her Bodley. He is author besides of a poem which for a first attempt is promising. It is made up of common images, and yet contrives to read originally. You see the writer felt all he pours forth, and has not palmed upon you expressions which he did not believe at the time to be more his own than adoptive. Rogers has paid him some proper compliments, with sound advice intermixed, upon a slight introduction of him by me; for which I feel obliged. Moxon has petition'd me by letter (for

he had not the confidence to ask it in London) to introduce him to you during his holydays ; pray pat him on the head, ask him a civil question or two about his verses, and favor him with your genuine autograph. He shall not be further troublesome. I think I have not sent any one upon a gaping mission to you a good while."

Edward Moxon, who was then nearly twenty-five, was a clerk in the publishing firm of Longmans. The volume which he had written was *The Prospect and other Poems*, dedicated to Samuel Rogers. We shall soon be much in his company.

Lamb adds, in the same letter, " We are all well, and I have at last broke the bonds of business a second time, never to put 'em on again. I pitch Colburn and his magazine to the divil. I find I can live without the necessity of writing, tho' last year I fretted myself to a fever with the hauntings of being starved. Those vapours are flown. All the difference I find is that I have no pocket money : that is, I must not pry upon an old book stall, and cull its contents as heretofore, but shoulders of mutton, Whitbread's entire, and Booth's best, abound as formerly."

In July we have a glimpse of the Lambs, in a letter from Leigh Hunt to Procter : " Be it known to you then, that here is a golden opportunity for you to behave like a humane Christian, and heap coals of fire on my head—vindictive charity—unappeasable forgiveness. Charles Lamb and his sister come to drink tea with me to-morrow afternoon at five, dinner being prohibited him by that ' second conscience ' of his, as he calls her. Well, to meet and be beatified with the sight of Charles Lamb, comes Mr. Atherstone, author of some poems which you have most probably heard of ; and as poets, like lovers, can never have one beatific vision but they desire another, I no sooner mention your name than he begs me for God's sake to let him have a sight of you. Pray gratify us all

if you can. Hazlitt has gone to France, and is to write a life of Bonaparte."

On September 9th Lamb writes to Dibdin, then staying at Hastings for his health, a long and amusing letter, nominally to improve his spirits but mischievously depressing in tone. It must, I think, be quoted in full :—

"Postmark. September 9, 1826.

"An answer is requested.

"Saturday.

"DEAR D.—I have observed that a Letter is never more acceptable than when received upon a rainy day, especially a rainy Sunday ; which moves me to send you somewhat, however short. This will find you sitting after Breakfast, which you will have prolonged as far as you can with consistency to the poor handmaid that has the reversion of the Tea Leaves ; making two nibbles of your last morsel of *stale* roll (you cannot have hot new ones on the Sabbath), and reluctantly coming to an end, because when that is done, what can you do till dinner ? You cannot go to the Beach, for the rain is drowning the sea, turning rank Thetis fresh, taking the brine out of Neptune's pickles, while mermaids sit upon rocks with umbrellas, their ivory combs sheathed for spoiling in the wet of waters foreign to them. You cannot go to the library, for it's shut. You are not religious enough to go to church. O it is worth while to cultivate piety to the gods, to have something to fill the heart up on a wet Sunday !

"You cannot cast accounts, for your ledger is being eaten up with moths in the Ancient Jewry. You cannot play at draughts, for there is none to play with you, and besides there is not a draught board in the house. You cannot go to market, for it closed last night. You cannot look in to the shops, their backs

are shut upon you. You cannot read the Bible, for it is not good reading for the sick and the hypochondriacal. You cannot while away an hour with a friend, for you have no friend round that Wrekin. You cannot divert yourself with a stray acquaintance, for you have picked none up. You cannot bear the chiming of Bells, for they invite you to a banquet, where you are no visitant. You cannot cheer yourself with the prospect of a tomorrow's letter, for none come on Mondays. You cannot count those endless vials on the mantelpiece with any hope of making a variation in their numbers. You have counted your spiders: your Bastile is exhausted. You sit and deliberately curse your hard exile from all familiar sights and sounds. Old Ranking poking in his head unexpectedly would just now be as good to you as Grimaldi. Any thing to deliver you from this intolerable weight of Ennui. You are too ill to shake it off: not ill enough to submit to it, and to lie down as a lamb under it.

"The Tyranny of Sickness is nothing to the Cruelty of Convalescence: 'tis to have Thirty Tyrants for one. That pattering rain drops on your brain. You'll be worse after dinner, for you must dine at one to-day, that Betty may go to afternoon service. She insists upon having her chopped hay. And then when she goes out, who *was* something to you, something to speak to—what an interminable afternoon you'll have to go thro'. You can't break yourself from your locality: you cannot say 'Tomorrow morning I set off for Banstead, by God': for you are book'd for Wednesday. Foreseeing this, I thought a *cheerful letter* would come in opportunely. If any of the little topics for mirth I have thought upon should serve you in this utter extinguishment of sunshine, to make you a little merry, I shall have had my ends. I love to make things comfortable. [*Here is an erasure.*] This, which is scratch'd out was the most material thing I had to say, but on maturer thoughts I defer it.

"P.S.—We are just sitting down to dinner with a pleasant party, Coleridge, Reynolds the dramatist, and Sam Bloxam: tomorrow (that is, to*day*), Liston, and Wyat of the Wells, dine with us. May this find you as jolly and freakish as we mean to be.

"C. Lamb."

The postscript may have been an invention; or it may have been wholly or partially true. Reynolds would be Frederick Reynolds, author of very many plays, among them one called "The Dramatist"; Bloxam was an old acquaintance whose son Lamb had recommended for Christ's Hospital; "Wyat of the Wells" (Sadler's Wells) has a jovial Thespian sound.

In the next letter—to Barton, on September 26th—Lamb explains how some of his time is being spent. "I am sorry you and yours have any plagues about dross matters. I have been sadly puzzled at the defalcation of more than one third of my income, out of which when entire I saved nothing. But cropping off wine, old books, &c. and in short all that can be call'd pocket money, I hope to be able to go on at the Cottage." It is interesting to note that Lamb saved nothing from his full income. The circumstance that at his death eight years later he left as much as £2,000 is due, I suppose, to the fact that his life was insured.

The letter contains also news of Lamb's project for filling his time to some purpose: "I am going thro' a course of reading at the Museum: the Garrick plays, out of part of which I formed my Specimens: I have Two Thousand to go thro'; and in a few weeks have despatch'd the tythe of 'em. It is a sort of Office to me; hours, 10 to 4, the same. It does me good. Man must have regular occupation, that has been used to it." The extracts from the old plays were intended for Hone's *Table Book* in 1827.

The letter is concerned also with the matter of some jars which Lamb was obtaining through an East India House acquaintance and official, for Barton's neighbour, the Rev. John Mitford, Rector of Benhall, editor of old poets, and later of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and cousin of the author of *Our Village*. Lamb describes him as "a pleasant Layman spoiled." An account of a visit to Colebrook Cottage, at about this time, concludes the review of Talfourd's *Letters of Charles Lamb* in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May and June, 1838. It was, I have no doubt, from Mitford's pen :—

"We have little or nothing that we can add of personal recollection, to what Mr. Talfourd has related of this somewhat eccentric, but most excellent person but what we do know bears witness to the fidelity of the portrait which his accomplished biographer has drawn. The last time we saw Lamb, was at his residence of Colebrook Cottage in Islington ; and, though we joined his society when the sun was hardly westering in his course, we did not leave it to return home till the morning star was fast descending, and the 'grey dawn' was creeping over the dewy fields and airy heights of Pentonville. There was no one but his sister with us.

"Lamb was in good spirits, talked of his different friends,—of Coleridge's vast reading,—of Wordsworth, —of Southey (whose hair, he triumphed to say, was grey, while his own retained its raven lustre)—spoke highly of Keats, and Barry Cornwall. In old poetry, Chapman's Homer detained us long, and Lamb was delighted to be informed, which he was for the first time, that there are two or three distinct translations of the old bard by this same venerable admirer. We offered to lend him one of the earlier translations. 'No, no,' he said, 'I know you wont like the *gap* it will leave in your library.' He liked Ambrose Phillips's delicate little verses. We talked of Milton's Samson Agonistes, when Miss Lamb's memory beat us both

at a long distance. In prose, he appeared to know more or less of most of our great authors of Elizabeth and James's time. Fuller, Burton, Sir T. Browne, Feltham, were his favourites; and he was very fond of picking up the little duodecimo volumes of Evelyn; he mentioned his book on 'Sallets' with delight. We forget whether we touched on Tom Coryat and the 'Water Poet,' but remember Randolph was not overlooked. Being asked how he knew his own books, one from the other (the choice gleanings of many a studious walk at the book stalls in Barbican), for scarcely any were lettered, and all were to a bibliophilist but a stray set of foundlings; 'How does a shepherd know his sheep?' was the answer.

"At our departure he warned us of the neighbourhood of the New River (only a few feet apart from his door) and the fate of poor George Dyer. We called a few mornings after; Lamb was out, and we sate chatting with Miss Lamb for an hour. Miss Mitford had but just left, who came to consult them on some dramatic reading for a new play. Lamb was then reading the old dramatists at the Museum, and making extracts. His sister expressed her delight in his new employment, as occupying his time, and keeping him from his walks, which she seemed to think *over long*. Little did we think, that we were never again to enjoy the society of this truly amiable, simple, excellent, and most highly gifted pair. During the evening repast, Lamb sprinkled pretty copiously his puns on albums and other similar evils over the surface of the conversation."

Here it is time to introduce another member of the Enfield family—Dash. Patmore is Dash's best historian. "During the early part of my acquaintance with Lamb, [he writes] when he lived at Colebrook Row, he had, *staying on a visit with him*, a large and very handsome dog, of a rather curious breed, belonging to Mr. Thomas Hood. The Lambs (albeit spinster

and bachelor) were not addicted to 'dumb creatures'; but this dog was an especial pet—(probably in virtue of his owner, who was a great favourite with them)—and he always accompanied Lamb on his long rambling daily walks in the vicinity of that part of the metropolis. But what I wish to point out to the reader's attention is, that during these interminable rambles,—heretofore pleasant in virtue of their profound loneliness and freedom as respected all companionship and restraint, —Lamb made himself a perfect slave to this dog—whose habits were of the most extravagantly errant nature, for, generally speaking, the creature was half-a-mile off from his companion, either before or behind, scouring the fields or roads in all directions, scampering up or down 'all manners of streets,' and keeping Lamb in a perfect fever of irritation and annoyance; for he was afraid of losing the dog when it was out of sight, and yet could not persuade himself to keep it *in* sight for a moment by curbing its roving spirit.

"Dash (that was his name) knew Lamb's weakness on these particulars as well as he did himself, and took a due dog-like advantage of it. In the Regent's Park in particular, Dash had his master completely at his mercy; for the moment they got into the ring, he used to get through the pailing on to the green-sward, and disappear for a quarter or half an hour together,—knowing perfectly well that Lamb did not dare to move from the spot where he (Dash) had disappeared, till such time as he thought proper to show himself again. And they used to take this particular walk much oftener than they otherwise would, precisely because Dash liked it and Lamb did not.

"I had often admired this dog; but was not a little astonished one day when Lamb and his sister came to dine with us at North End (near Fulham), where we then lived, and brought Dash with them all the way on foot from Islington! The undertaking of the pig-driver that Leigh Hunt tells of so capitally in the

Companion, must have been nothing to this of the dear couple, in conducting Dash through London streets. It appeared, however, that they had not brought him out this time purely for his own *delassement*, but to ask me if I would have him, 'if it were only out of charity,' Miss Lamb said half in joke, half in earnest; 'for if they kept him much longer he would be the death of Charles!'

"I readily took charge of Dash (to be restored to his original master, Hood, in case of ill-behaviour and loss of favour); and I soon found, as I expected, that his wild and wilful ways were a pure imposition upon the easy temper of Lamb, and that as soon as he found himself in the hands of one who knew what dog-decorum was, he subsided into the best bred and best behaved of his species."

Dash would be Lamb's second or third dog, for we have Manning's evidence that there was a predecessor in the barking Prynne (so called, I imagine, from having, like the author of *Histrio-Mastix*, cropped ears); while in the letter to Miss Humphreys, in 1821, Lamb refers to one Pompey. But Pompey may also have been Prynne. Patmore prints a letter from Lamb, belonging perhaps to September, 1827, asking news of Dash: "Excuse my anxiety—but how is Dash?—(I should have asked if Mrs. Patmore kept her rules, and was improving—but Dash came uppermost. The order of our thoughts should be the order of our writing.) Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore*? Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in *his* conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes, to St. Luke's with him! All the dogs here are going mad, if you believe the overseers; but I protest they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water. If he won't lick it up, it is a sign he does not like it. Does

his tail wag horizontally or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased—for otherwise there is no judging. You can't be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it was the hydrophobia." One of these children, by the way, was the poet Coventry Patmore, then four years old.

CHAPTER XLV

1827

The Death of Randal Norris—Mrs. Coe's Reminiscences—Lamb Among Children—Lamb's Good Things—Angling—"On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born"—Mary Lamb by Thomas Hood—*The Plea of the Midsummer-Fairies*—A Few Jokes—An Evening at the Hoods—Nonsense to Patmore—Emma Isola's Latinity—The Clarkson Memorial—"In My Own Album"—The Removal to Enfield—Mary Lamb Ill Again—Enter Thomas Westwood—Lamb and Walton—Robinson at Enfield.

IT was in January, 1827, that a link between Charles and Mary Lamb and their childhood was broken, by the death of their and their parents' friend Randal Norris, whom we met in Chapter XVII. In his letter to Crabb Robinson (afterwards included in the *Last Essays of Elia*, 1833, as "A Death-Bed") from which I quote in that chapter, Lamb writes: "To the last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now."

Before Randal Norris's death his daughters had established a school at Widford; and after his death Mrs. Norris and Richard joined them there, and there they lived to the end. We have at once further glimpses of the Norris family and more light on Lamb's quaint way with children, in the reminiscences of Mrs. Elizabeth Coe, once a pupil of the Misses Norris, who died as recently as 1903, and with whom, a year earlier, the late W. J. Craig (who was an editor of both Lamb and Shakespeare) and I had an interesting conversation, the substance of which was printed in the *Athenæum* for June 7th, 1902. Mrs. Coe (formerly Elizabeth Hunt, of Widford), who was then in her

eighty-fourth year, remembered Lamb as he was between 1827 and 1832. In those years he used often to walk down to Widford—twenty-two miles from London—to spend a day or two among old friends and older associations. These little visits probably signified that Mary Lamb was ill, for Mrs. Coe did not remember that Mary Lamb ever accompanied her brother. At any rate, she never saw her. Miss Isola, she said, came with him once, and her feet were so sore from the journey that she had to lie in bed for two or three days, Mr. Lamb waiting for her recovery. Mr. Lamb often had blisters too, but he did not seem to mind: he loved walking too much.

His chief friends at Widford in those days were the Norrises. They lived at Goddard House, the school being known as Goddard House School. The sisters were always called Miss Betsy and Miss Jane. On moving to Widford in 1827 Mrs. Norris quickly took her place as the good angel of her old village: doctor, nurse, and every one's refuge in trouble. No sooner did the rumour of sickness waft in, than, I gather, Goddard House projected beef tea and jellies into the afflicted home. Mrs. Coe says that Mr. Richard Norris, who was deaf and peculiar, lived in the house too.

Among the pupils at Goddard House was Elizabeth Hunt, one of the three little daughters of Thomas Hunt, of the Widford water mill, whose wife and Mrs. Norris were old friends. Lizzie Hunt afterwards became Mrs. Coe. In those days—ninety and more years ago—she was Mr. Lamb's favourite among all the Widford children, partly, she fancied, from her quickness in catching a mischievous idea. She remembered, with a vividness that was, to some extent, communicable, his affected conviction that her hair curled only by artificial means, and his repeated warnings at bedtime that she must on no account forget to put in her papers. "But I don't have to curl it, Mr. Lamb, I don't, I don't." "Well, bring me a mug of

beer from old Bogey and we'll say no more about it." Old Bogey was the big cask.

As a rule, when Mr. Lamb walked down to see the Norrises, he used to sleep at the mill. "Now, Mrs. Hunt," he would say, "are you going to let me creep into a goose's belly to-night?" for he always had his joke, and no one would expect him to call a feather bed a feather bed, like other folks. He said it was like heaven, in a goose's belly. When he made a joke he did not laugh himself.

He always brought a book with him, sometimes several, and he would read or write a great deal. His clothes were rusty and shabby, like a poor Dissenting minister's. He was very thin and looked half-starved: partly the effect of high cheek-bones. He wore knee-breeches and gaiters and a high stock. He carried a walking stick with which he used to strike at pebbles. He smoked a black clay pipe. No one would have taken him for what he was, but he was clearly a man apart. He took pleasure in looking eccentric. He was proud of being *the* Mr. Lamb. (The testimony as to the pipe is interesting because Talfourd says that Lamb's later years were "guiltless of tobacco." Lamb himself says, however, in his whimsical autobiographical sketch, written in 1827, that though an extinct volcano he still emitted occasional puffs. I prefer to believe Mrs. Coe rather than Talfourd on this point.)

Mrs. Coe did not remember anything about Mr. Lamb's taste in food, except that he was fond of turnips. He used to come down to breakfast late. She heard, she believed from his own lips, the story of the turnip crop and the boiled legs of mutton, which will be found on page 765. Lamb must have said more good things that fell on the wrong ears and were never understood, remembered or reported, than any one in literature; but now and then he repeated them himself to a fitting audience, and we have proof in the

letters that this agreeable pleasantry in the stage-coach was as attractive to him as any. There could indeed hardly be a better story than this to support the jester's right to enjoy his own joke which Lamb asserted in the Popular Fallacies. While on this subject I might quote Procter, in some memories of Lamb contributed to the *Athenæum* for January 24th, 1835 : "It is unfortunate that most of his brilliant things—all such as are not preserved in his essays or in his unpublished letters (a mine to be worked)—are lost. In general, when a man casts forth a clever thought, you may, should you forget it, be sure to hear of it in another place. It will be in Bacon or Hobbes, in Hume or Rousseau, or the philosopher of Ferney. But if Lamb said a good thing, and it was lost, it was lost for ever ; for all that he said was sincerely and emphatically his own. It is possible, indeed, that here and there one of his vagrant thoughts may still be working its way up in some hearer's mind ; producing, if the soil be good, a delicate exotic flower. It may be admired and prized (by common eyes) more than the original would have been ; but it will be no more *like* the original, than the polyanthus which 'the garden grows,' is to the primrose—the 'virgin primrose'—the 'pale primrose'—of the April fields."

Mr. Lamb was very free, said Mrs. Coe, with his money. To beggars he always gave ; just what his hand happened to draw from his pocket, even as much as three shillings. "Poor devil ! he wants it more than I do ; and I've got plenty," she has heard him say. He would take the children into the village to the little general shop. It had a door cut in two, like a butcher's, and he would lean over the lower half and rap his stick on the floor, calling loudly, "Abigail Ives ! Abigail Ives !" "Ah, Mr. Lamb," she used to reply from the inner room, "I thought I knew your rap." "Yes, Abigail, it is I, and I've brought my money with me. Give these young ladies sixpennyworth of Gibraltar

rock." Gibraltar rock was Abigail Ives's speciality, and sixpennyworth was an unheard-of amount except when Mr. Lamb was in the village. It had to be broken with a hammer. (Mrs. Cowden Clarke gives us another glimpse of Lamb's humorous way of shopping—at Enfield—and the jocular terms on which he met old ladies behind the counter. I imagine that it would have been a very dark day indeed with him when he had no odd yet cordial greeting for his neighbours, particularly his poorer ones; and I doubt if the perplexity that so often must have accompanied the reception of his remarks by men and women of intellect was ever felt by those of humbler capacity. I suspect that he shot over the heads only of the self-satisfied.)

When Mr. Lamb joined the Norrises' dinner-table, said Mrs. Coe, he kept every one laughing. Mr. Richard sat at one end, and some of the school children would be there too. One day Mr. Lamb gave every one a fancy name all round the table, and made a verse on each. "You are so-and-so," he said, "and you are so-and-so," adding the rhyme. "What's he saying? What are you laughing at?" Mr. Richard asked testily, for he was short-tempered. Miss Betsy explained the joke to him, and Mr. Lamb, coming to his turn, said—only he said it in verse—"Now, Dick, it's your turn. I shall call you Gruborum; because all you think of is your food and your stomach." Mr. Richard pushed back his chair in a rage and stamped out of the room. "Now I've done it," said Mr. Lamb: "I must go and make friends with my old chum. Give me a large plate of pudding to take to him." When he came back he said, "It's all right. I thought the pudding would do it." Mr. Lamb and Mr. Richard never got on very well, and Mr. Richard did not like his teasing ways at all; but Mr. Lamb often went for long walks with him, because no one else would. He did many kind things like that.

There used to be a half-holiday at Goddard House

when Mr. Lamb came, partly because he would force his way into the schoolroom and make seriousness impossible. His head would suddenly appear at the door in the midst of lessons, with "Well, Betsy! How do, Jane?" "O, Mr. Lamb!" they would say, and that was the end of work for that day. He was really rather naughty with the children: one of his tricks was to teach them a new version of the church catechism (Mrs. Coe did not remember it, but we may rest assured, I fear, that it was secular), and he made a great fuss with Lizzie Hunt for her skill in saying the Lord's Prayer backwards, which he had taught her.

Mr. Lamb had a favourite seat in a tree in the Wilderness at Blakesware, where he would sit and read for hours. Just before meal times Mrs. Hunt would send the children to tell him to come; but sometimes he preferred to stay there and eat some bread and cheese. He always was particular to return a message either way. "Give your mother my love and kisses, and say I'll come directly." Or "Give mother my love and kisses, and say I'll eat her beautiful luncheon here." Adding, "Don't forget the kisses, whatever you do." At other times he would watch the trout in the stream, and perhaps feed them, for half the morning. Once or twice he took a rod, but he could never bring himself to fix the worms. "Barbarous," he used to say, "barbarous." (Thomas Westwood, in the preface to his *Chronicle of the Compleat Angler*, corroborates this attitude; while in a letter to Southey, in 1799, Lamb calls anglers "those patient tyrants, meek inflictors of pangs intolerable, cool devils.")

Goddard House School ceased to be when Mrs. Norris's brother Mr. Faint died and left the family comfortably off again. Miss Betsy and Miss Jane, said Mrs. Coe, set up their own houses, and soon after each married a Mr. Tween, brothers and farmers. It was Charles Tween who told W. C. Hazlitt

that Mr. Lamb had so small and "immaterial" a figure that when out walking with him he used to put his hands under his arms and lift him over a stile as if he were nothing. Both sisters lived to a good old age, Mrs. Arthur Tween dying at Widford in 1891 and Mrs. Charles Tween at Hertford in 1894. They preserved with proper piety relics of Charles Lamb. These treasures, however, have since been dispersed, the present generation lacking interest in the family's old friend.

Crabb Robinson's *Diary* has these entries on the subject of Randal Norris :—

"Jan. 27, 1827 :—After tea [after Anthony Robinson's funeral] I went up to Charles Lamb. I found that he too was fully engaged by a similar occurrence of a like nature—old Norris of the Temple. He wanted me to assist in forwarding a petition from the widow to the Benchers. I met with M. Burney there.

"Jan. 28 :—Then I went to Lamb. Dined with him. M. Burney there. We were chiefly occupied talking of a petition to be presented to the middle Temple Benchers for Mrs. Norris." Robinson's effort was successful and Mrs. Norris received an annual grant.

On February 1st, 1827, Robinson has this entry : "I went to Lamb. Found him in trouble about his friend Allsop, who is a ruined man." Allsop says in his book on Coleridge : "Charles Lamb, Charles and Mary Lamb, 'union in partition,' were never wanting in the hour of need : and I have a clear recollection of Miss Lamb's addressing me in *a tone* acting *at once* as a solace and support, and after as a stimulus, to which I owe more perhaps than to the more extended *arguments* of all others."

Lamb of late had written little verse, but in the spring of 1827 an event occurred which inspired one of the most beautiful and characteristic of all his poems. In May Mrs. Hood (born Jane Reynolds, the sister of

John Hamilton Reynolds) gave birth to a child, who survived only a few minutes. The note of sympathy which Lamb wrote to the father perfectly illustrates his freakish sprite, at once so human and so humorous.

"DEAREST HOOD,—Your news has spoil'd us a merry meeting. Miss Kelly and we were coming, but your letter elicited a flood of tears from Mary, and I saw she was not fit for a party. God bless you and the mother (or should be mother) of your sweet girl that should have been. I have won sexpence of Moxon by the *sex* of the dear gone one.

"Yours most truly and hers,

"C. L."

Afterwards, at Mrs. Hood's wish, he wrote his exquisite lines "On an Infant Dying as Soon as Born," notable for a blend of grave and delicate thought and fancy, and an Elizabethan quaintness, that could have come at that date from Lamb alone.

ON

AN INFANT DYING AS SOON AS BORN

I saw where in the shroud did lurk
A curious frame of Nature's work.
A flow'ret crushed in the bud,
A nameless piece of Babyhood,
Was in a cradle-coffin lying;
Extinct, with scarce the sense of dying;
So soon to exchange the imprisoning womb
For darker closets of the tomb!
She did but ope an eye, and put
A clear beam forth, then strait up shut
For the long dark: ne'er more to see
Through glasses of mortality.
Riddle of destiny, who can show
What thy short visit meant, or know
What thy errand here below?
Shall we say, that Nature blind
Check'd her hand, and changed her mind,
Just when she had exactly wrought
A finish'd pattern without fault?
Could she flag, or could she tire,

Or lack'd she the Promethean fire
(With her nine moons' long workings sicken'd)
That should thy little limbs have quicken'd ?
Limbs so firm, they seem'd to assure
Life of health, and days mature :
Woman's self in miniature !
Limbs so fair, they might supply
(Themselves now but cold imagery)
The sculptor to make Beauty by.
Or did the stern-eyed Fate descry,
That babe, or mother, one must die ;
So in mercy left the stock,
And cut the branch ; to save the shock
Of young years widow'd ; and the pain,
When Single State comes back again
To the lone man who, 'reft of wife,
Thenceforward drags a maimed life ?
The economy of Heaven is dark ;
And wisest clerks have miss'd the mark,
Why Human Buds, like this, should fall,
More brief than fly ephemeral,
That has his day ; while shrivel'd crones
Stiffen with age to stocks and stones ;
And crabbed use the conscience sears
In sinners of an hundred years.
Mother's prattle, mother's kiss,
Baby fond, thou ne'er wilt miss.
Rites, which custom does impose,
Silver bells and baby clothes ;
Coral redder than those lips,
Which pale death did late eclipse;
Music framed for infant's glee,
Whistle never tuned for thee ;
Though thou want'st not, thou shalt have them,
Loving hearts were they which gave them.
Let not one be missing ; nurse,
See them laid upon the hearse
Of infant slain by doom perverse.
Why should kings and nobles have
Pictured trophies to their grave ;
And we, churls, to thee deny
Thy pretty toys with thee to lie,
A more harmless vanity ?

In the summer of 1827 the Lambs visited Enfield again, lodging again at Mrs. Leishman's on Chase Side, but without the Allsops ; and there they seem to have

seen much of the Hoods. In July Hood made a caricature of Mary Lamb getting over a stile, which Lamb sent to Hone for the *Table Book*, with a note : " This is Hood's, done from the life, of Mary getting over a style here. Mary, out of a pleasant revenge, wants you to get it *engrav'd* in Table Book to surprise H., who I know will be amus'd with you so doing. Append some observations about the awkwardness of country styles about Edmonton, and the difficulty of elderly Ladies getting over 'em.——That is to say, if you think the sketch good enough." The engraving was made and inserted in the *Table Book* as a portrait of John Gilpin's wife, with some comments by Lamb.

Hood's poem, *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, was published in 1827 with a dedication to Lamb, beginning thus :—

TO CHARLES LAMB

My Dear Friend,

I thank my literary fortune that I am not reduced, like many better wits, to barter dedications, for the hope or promise of patronage, with some nominally great man ; but that where true affection points, and honest respect, I am free to gratify my head, and heart by a sincere inscription. An intimacy and dearness worthy of a much earlier date than our acquaintance can refer to, direct me at once to your name : and with his acknowledgment of your ever kind feeling towards me, I desire to record a respect and admiration for you as a writer, which no one acquainted with our literature, save Elia himself, will think disproportionate or misplaced. If I had not these better reasons to govern me, I should be guided to the same selection by your intense yet critical relish for the works of our great Dramatist, and for that favourite play in particular which has furnished the subject of my verses. . .

Lamb acknowledged the compliment by very prettily paraphrasing in the *Table Book* a portion of Hood's story under the title " The Defeat of Time."

Here, although possibly they refer to a slightly later period, I may print some further recollections of Lamb by Hood. " From Colebrooke, Lamb removed to Enfield Chase,—a painful operation at all times, for

as he feelingly misapplied Wordsworth [? Othello], 'the *moving* accident was not his trade.' As soon as he was settled, I called upon him, and found him in a bald-looking yellowish house, with a bit of a garden, and a wasp's nest convanient, as the Irish say, for one stung my pony as he stood at the door. Lamb laughed at the fun; but, as the clown says, the whirligig of time brought round its revenges. He was one day bantering my wife on her dread of wasps, when all at once he uttered a horrible shout,—a wounded specimen of the species had slily crawled up the leg of the table, and stung him in the thumb. I told him it was a refutation well put in, like Smollett's timely snowball. 'Yes,' said he, 'and a stinging commentary on Macbeth—

> "*By the pricking of my thumbs,*
> *Something wicked this way comes.*" ' "

Hood gives two or three specimens of Lamb's jokes. "Being requested," he says, "by a young Schoolmaster to take charge of his flock for a day, 'during the unavoidable absence of the Principal,' he willingly undertook the charge, but made no other use of his 'brief authority' than to give the boys a whole holiday. . . . [This was probably at Widford.]

"Talking of Poetry, Lamb told me one day that he had just met with the most vigorous line he had ever read. 'Where?' 'Out of the Camden's Head, all in one line—

> 'To *One Hundred Pots of Porter* . . £1 1 8.'

"'Scott,' says Cunningham, 'was a stout walker.' Lamb was a *porter* one. He calculated Distances, not by Long Measure, but by Ale and Beer Measure. 'Now I have walked a pint.' Many a time I have accompanied him in these matches against Meux, not without sharing in the stake." Hood's words remind me that to a pleasant paper on Enfield by Cowden Clarke in the *Tatler* of October 11th, 1830, is appended

the mischievous postscript: "I omitted to mention, that our friend L * * * should be apprised to the shutting up of two London porter houses (Barclay and Perkins's) since his quitting the neighbourhood of E——." [1]

Before leaving the Hoods I should like to quote the interesting and probably very typical picture of the Lambs in company which is given by Mrs. Balmanno, an American friend of the Cowden Clarkes, in her *Pen and Pencil*, 1858, describing an evening at the Hoods: "Miss Lamb, although many years older than her brother, by no means looked so, but presented the pleasant appearance of a mild, rather stout, and comely maiden lady of middle age. Dressed with quaker-like simplicity in dove-coloured silk, with a transparent kerchief of snow-white muslin folded across her bosom, she at once prepossessed the beholder in her favour, by an aspect of serenity and peace. Her manners were very quiet and gentle, and her voice low. She smiled frequently, but seldom laughed, partaking of the courtesies and hospitalities of her merry host and hostess with all the cheerfulness and grace of a most mild and kindly nature.

"Her behaviour to her brother was like that of an admiring disciple; her eyes seldom absent from his face. Even when apparently engrossed in conversation with others, she would, by supplying some word for which he was at a loss, even when talking in a distant part of the room, show how closely her mind waited upon his. Mr. Lamb was in high spirits, sauntering about the room, with his hands crossed behind his back, conversing by fits and starts with those most familiarly known to him, but evidently mentally acknowledging Miss Kelly to be the *rara avis* of his thoughts, by the great attention he paid to every word she uttered. Truly pleasant it must have been to her,

[1] Lamb having, in 1830 (see Chapter XLVIII), settled again in London for a few months.

even though accustomed to see people listen breathless with admiration while she spoke, to find her words have so much charm for such a man as Charles Lamb.

"He appeared to enjoy himself greatly, much to the gratification of Mrs. Hood, who often interchanged happy glances with Miss Lamb, who nodded approvingly. He spoke much—with emphasis and hurry of words, sorely impeded by the stammering utterance which in him was not unattractive. Miss Kelly (charming, natural Miss Kelly, who has drawn from her audiences more heart-felt tears and smiles than perhaps any other English actress), with quiet good humour listened and laughed at the witty sallies of her host and his gifted friend, seeming as little an actress as it is possible to conceive. Once however, when some allusion was made to a comic scene in a new play then just brought out, wherein she had performed to the life the character of a low-bred lady's maid passing herself off as her mistress, Miss Kelly arose, and with a kind of resistless ardour repeated a few sentences so inimitably, that everybody laughed as much as if the real lady's maid, and not the actress, had been before them; while she who had so well personated the part, quietly resumed her seat without the least sign of merriment, as grave as possible. Most striking had been the transition from the calm lady-like person, to the gay, loquacious soubrette; and not less so, the sudden extinction of vivacity, and resumption of well-bred decorum. This little scene for a few moments charmed everybody out of themselves, and gave a new impetus to conversation. . . .

"Mr. Lamb oddly walked all round the table, looking closely at any dish that struck his fancy before he would decide where to sit, telling Mrs. Hood that he should by that means know how to select some dish that was difficult to carve, and take the trouble off her hands; accordingly having jested in this manner, he placed himself with great deliberation before a

lobster-salad, observing *that* was the thing. On her asking him to take some roast fowl he assented. 'What part shall I help you to, Mr. Lamb?' 'Back,' said he quickly; 'I always prefer back.' My husband laid down his knife and fork, and looking upwards exclaimed: 'By heavens! I could not have believed it, if anybody else had sworn it.' 'Believed what?' said kind Mrs. Hood, anxiously colouring to the temples, and fancying there was something amiss in the piece he had been helped to. 'Believe what? why madam, that Charles Lamb was a back-biter!' Hood gave one of his short quick laughs, gone almost ere it had come, whilst Lamb went off into a loud fit of mirth, exclaiming: 'Now that's devilish good! I'll sup with you to-morrow night.' This eccentric flight made everybody very merry, and amidst a most amusing mixture of wit and humour, sense and nonsense, we feasted merrily, amidst jocose health-drinking, sentiments, speeches and songs.

"Mr. Hood with inexpressible gravity in the upper part of his face and his mouth twitching with smiles, sang his own comic song 'If you go to France be sure you learn the lingo'; his pensive manner and feeble voice making it doubly ludicrous. Mr. Lamb, on being pressed to sing, excused himself in his own peculiar manner, but offered to pronounce a Latin eulogium instead. This was accepted, and he accordingly stammered forth a long strain of Latin words; among which, as the name of Mrs. Hood frequently occurred, we ladies thought it was in praise of her. The delivery of this speech occupied about five minutes. On enquiring of a gentleman who sat next me whether Mr. Lamb was praising Mrs. Hood, he informed me that it was by no means the case, the eulogium being on the lobster-salad!"

To resume the chronicle of the year, on July 19th Lamb sent Patmore, who was then in France, and who moved him to some of his wildest nonsense, the following

letter. I quote from *My Friends and Acquaintances*, but the transcript there may be very inaccurate :—

"Dear P.—I am so poorly! I have been to a funeral, where I made a pun, to the consternation of the rest of the mourners. And we had wine. I can't describe to you the howl which the widow set up at proper intervals. Dash could, for it was not unlike what he makes.

"The letter I sent you was one directed to the care of E. White, India House, for Mrs. Hazlitt. *Which* Mrs. Hazlitt I don't yet know, but A. has taken it to France on speculation. Really it is embarrassing. There is Mrs. present H., Mrs. late H., and Mrs. John H., and to which of the three Mrs. Wiggins's it appertains I don't know. I wanted to open it, but it's transportation. . . .

"Dash is frightful this morning. He whines and stands up on his hind legs. He misses Becky, who is gone to town. I took him to Barnet the other day, and he couldn't eat his victuals after it. Pray God his intellectuals be not slipping.

"Mary is gone out for some soles. I suppose 'tis no use to ask you to come and partake of 'em; else there's a steam-vessel.

"I am doing a tragi-comedy in two acts, and have got on tolerably; but it will be refused, or worse. I never had luck with anything my name was put to.

"Oh, I am so poorly! I *waked* it at my cousin's the bookbinder's, who is now with God; or, if he is not, it's no fault of mine.

"We hope the Frank wines do not disagree with Mrs. Patmore. By the way, I like her.

"Did you ever taste frogs? Get them, if you can. They are like little Lilliput rabbits, only a thought nicer.

"Christ, how sick I am!—not of the world, but of the widow's shrub. She's sworn under £6000, but

I think she perjured herself. She howls in E *la*, and I comfort her in B flat. You understand music? . . .

"'No shrimps!' (That's in answer to Mary's question about how the soles are to be done.)

"I am uncertain where this *wandering* letter may reach you. What you mean by Poste Restante, God knows. Do you mean I must pay the postage? So I do to Dover.

"We had a merry passage with the widow at the Commons. She was howling—part howling and part giving directions to the proctor—when crash! down went my sister through a crazy chair, and made the clerks grin, and I grinned, and the widow tittered—*and then I knew that she was not inconsolable.* Mary was more frightened than hurt.

"She'd make a good match for anybody (by she, I mean the widow).

> "If he bring but a *relict* away,
> He is happy, nor heard to complain.
>
> "SHENSTONE.

"Procter has got a wen growing out at the nape of his neck, which his wife wants him to have cut off; but I think it rather an agreeable excrescence—like his poetry—redundant. Hone has hanged himself for debt. Godwin was taken up for picking pockets. . . . Becky takes to bad courses. Her father was blown up in a steam machine. The coroner found it Insanity. I should not like him to sit on my letter.

"Do you observe my direction? Is it Gallic?—Classical?

"Do try and get some frogs. You must ask for 'grenouilles' (green-eels). They don't understand 'frogs,' though it's a common phrase with us.

"If you go through Bulloign (Boulogne) enquire if old Godfrey is living, and how he got home from the Crusades. He must be a very old man now.

"If there is anything new in politics or literature

in France, keep it till I see you again, for I'm in no hurry. Chatty-Briant is well I hope.

"I think I have no more news; only give both our loves ('all three,' says Dash) to Mrs. Patmore, and bid her get quite well, as I am at present, bating qualms, and the grief incident to losing a valuable relation.

C. L.

"Londres, July 19, 1827."

The tragi-comedy in two acts was "The Wife's Trial," a dramatic version of Crabbe's poem "The Confidant." It was not produced on the stage. Of Lamb's cousin, the bookbinder, we know nothing. "Chatty-Briant" is the author of *Génie du Christianisme*.

On July 26th Lamb gives Mrs. Shelley, the poet's widow, further particulars of the play on which he is working, and his difficulties with it. He adds, "I am teaching Emma Latin to qualify her for a superior governess-ship; which we see no prospect of her getting. 'Tis like feeding a child with chopped hay from a spoon. Sisyphus—his labours were as nothing to it. Actives and passives jostle in her nonsense, till a deponent enters, like Chaos, more to embroil the fray. Her prepositions are suppositions; her conjunctions copulative have no connection in them; her concords disagree; her interjections are purely English 'Ah!' and 'Oh!' with a yawn and a gape in the same tongue; and she herself is a lazy, block-headly supine. As I say to her, ass *in præsenti* rarely makes a wise man *in futuro*."

Mary Lamb seems also to have helped, as her sonnet "To Emma Learning Latin" (printed in *Blackwood* for June, 1829) tells us:—

> Droop not, dear Emma, dry those falling tears,
> And call up smiles into thy pallid face,
> Pallid and care-worn with thy arduous race:
> In few brief months thou hast done the work of years.
> To young beginnings natural are these fears.
> A right good scholar shalt thou one day be,

And that no distant one; when even she,
Who now to thee a star far off appears,
That most rare Latinist, the Northern Maid—
The language-loving Sarah [1] of the Lake—
Shall hail thee Sister Linguist. This will make
Thy friends, who now afford thee careful aid,
A recompense most rich for all their pains,
Counting thy acquisitions their best gains.

A few weeks later Dibdin is informed that "Emma has just died, choak'd with a Gerund in dum. On opening her we found a Participle in rus in the pericardium."

It was probably some time in the summer of 1827 that Lamb wrote the fine letter to Mrs. Basil Montagu on the subject of the memorial to Thomas Clarkson, the abolitionist, which was to be raised in his life-time (for he lived until 1846) above Wade Mill, in Hertfordshire. Lamb contributed a guinea and these remarks: "Monuments to goodness, even after death, are equivocal. I turn away from Howard's, I scarce know why. Goodness blows no trumpet, nor desires to have it blown. We should be modest for a modest man—as he is for himself. The vanities of Life—Art, Poetry, Skill military—are subjects for trophies; not the silent thoughts arising in a good man's mind in lonely places. Was I [Clarkson,] I should never be able to walk or ride near —— again. Instead of bread, we are giving him a stone. Instead of the locality recalling the noblest moment of his existence, it is a place at which his friends (that is, himself) blow to the world, 'What a good man is he!' I sat down upon a hillock at Forty Hill yesternight—a fine contemplative evening,—with a thousand good speculations about mankind. How I yearned with cheap benevolence! I shall go and inquire of the stone-cutter, that cuts the tombstones here, what a stone with a short inscription

[1] Mary Lamb's footnote: Daughter of S. T. Coleridge, Esq., an accomplished linguist in the Greek and Latin tongues, and translatress of a History of the Abipones.

will cost; just to say—'Here C. Lamb loved his brethren of mankind.'"

On August 9th are letters from Charles Lamb to Stoddart, then Sir John, Chief Justice, and Justice of the Vice-Admiralty Court, in Malta, and from Mary Lamb to Lady Stoddart. Stoddart's son, a boy at Charterhouse, seems to have been getting into a scrape from which he had been extricated, I imagine, through Lamb's intervention with the headmaster. The punishment was the translation of Gray's Elegy into Greek elegiacs, with which Lamb had helped him.

On August 28th Lamb tells Barton that he has sent his play to Charles Kemble, and also four poems of his own, and one of Barton's to a new and fashionable album. Chief of Lamb's contributions was the copy of verses entitled "In My Own Album," which I print below—one of the saddest poems that I know:—

Fresh clad from heaven in robes of white,
A young probationer of light,
Thou wert my soul, an Album bright,

A spotless leaf; but thought, and care,
And friend and foe, in foul or fair,
Have "written strange defeatures" there;

And Time with heaviest hand of all,
Like that fierce writing on the wall,
Hath stamp'd sad dates—he can't recal;

And error gilding worse designs—
Like speckled snake that strays and shines—
Betrays his path by crooked lines;

And vice hath left his ugly blot;
And good resolves, a moment hot,
Fairly began—but finish'd not;

And fruitless, late remorse doth trace—
Like Hebrew lore a backward pace—
Her irrecoverable race.

Disjointed numbers; sense unknit;
Huge reams of folly, shreds of wit
Compose the mingled mass of it.

My scalded eyes no longer brook
Upon this ink-blurr'd thing to look—
Go, shut the leaves, and clasp the book.

In September the brother and sister made a great decision: they definitely cut themselves adrift from London by taking a house at Enfield on Chase Side. It still stands almost as in the Lambs' day, and is now (1920) in the possession of Mr. W. R. Davis. A tablet records the circumstance that Charles Lamb resided there from September, 1827, until October, 1829. Certain additions on the eastside are new since Lamb's time, but the character of the house is unimpaired Creepers, however, now cover the façade. In September Lamb tells Hood the news: "We have got our books into our new house. I am a drayhorse if I was not asham'd of the indigested dirty lumber, as I toppled 'em out of the cart, and blest Becky that came with 'em for her having an unstuff'd brain with such rubbish. We shall get in by Michael's mass. Twas with some pain we were evuls'd from Colebrook. You may find some of our flesh sticking to the door posts. To change habitations is to die to them, and in my time I have died seven deaths. But I don't know whether every such change does not bring with it a rejuvenescence. 'Tis an enterprise, and shoves back the sense of death's approximating, which, tho' not terrible to me, is at all times particularly distasteful. My house-deaths have generally been periodical, recurring after seven years, but this last is premature by half that time. Cut off in the flower of Colebrook. The Middletonian stream and all its echoes mourn. Even minnows dwindle. A parvis fiunt MINIMI.[1] I fear to invite Mrs. Hood to our new mansion, lest she envy it, & rote [? rout] us. But when we are fairly in, I hope she will come & try it. I heard she & you were made uncomfortable by some unworthy-to-be-cared-for attacks, and have tried to set up a feeble counteraction thro' the Table Book

[1] Their smallness grows to a minnowmum.

of last Saturday.[1] Has it not reach'd you, that you are silent about it? Our new domicile is no manor house, but new, & externally not inviting, but furnish'd within with every convenience. Capital new locks to every door, capital grates in every room, with nothing to pay for incoming & the rent £10 less than the Islington one. It was built a few years since at £1100 expence, they tell me, & I perfectly believe it. And I get it for £35 exclusive of moderate taxes. We think ourselves most lucky. It is not our intention to abandon Regent Street, & West End perambulations (monastic & terrible thought!) but occasionally to breathe the FRESHER AIR of the metropolis. We shall put up a bedroom or two (all we want) for occasional ex-rustication, where we shall visit, not be visited. Plays too we'll see,—perhaps our own. Urbani Sylvani, & Sylvan Urbanuses in turns. Courtiers for a spurt, then philosophers. Old homely tell-truths and learn-truths in the virtuous shades of Enfield, Liars again and mocking gibers in the coffee houses & resorts of London. What can a mortal desire more for his biparted nature?

"O the curds & cream you shall eat with us here!

"O the turtle soup and lobster sallads we shall devour with you there!

"O the old books we shall peruse here!

"O the new nonsense we shall trifle over there!

"O Sir T. Browne!—here.

"O Mr. Hood & Mr. Jerdan there.

thine,

"C (urbanus) L (sylvanus) (ELIA ambo)——."

Unhappily the excitements of moving were too much for Mary Lamb, and she again fell ill, so that the early days in the new house were sad ones for Lamb and Emma Isola. The attack was one of the longest from which she had suffered.

The interesting reminiscences of Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb which were contributed by the late Thomas

[1] "The Defeat of Time." See page 713.

Westwood to *Notes and Queries*, begin with the day in the summer of 1827 on which they made the great plunge and took a house as far from their beloved city as Enfield. Thomas Westwood was then a boy of thirteen, living next door. Writing in 1866 he said : " My first glimpse of the Lamb household, however, is as vivid in my recollection as if it were of yesterday. It was in Enfield. Leaning idly out of window, I saw a group of three issuing from the ' gambogey-looking cottage ' close at hand : a slim middle-aged man, in quaint, uncontemporary habiliments ; a rather shapeless bundle of an old lady, in a bonnet like a mob-cap ; and a young girl. While before them, bounded a riotous dog (Hood's immortal ' Dash '), holding a board with ' This House to be Let ' on it, in his jaws. Lamb was on his way back to the house-agent, and that was his fashion of announcing that he had taken the premises."

Westwood's recollections range over the next few years, extending to the time when, after leaving the gambogey-looking cottage, the Lambs moved under his father's roof ; but I think they may come here not unfittingly. " I soon grew to be on intimate terms with my neighbour ; who let me loose in his library, and initiated me into a school of literature, which Mrs. Trimmer might not have considered the most salutary under the circumstances. Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Farquhar, Defoe, Fielding—these were the pastures in which I delighted to graze, in those early years ; and which, in spite of Trimmers, I believe did me less evil than good. My heart yearns, even now, to those old books. Their faces seem all familiar to me, even their patches and botches, the work of a wizened old cobbler hard by : for little wotted Lamb of Roger Paynes and Charles Lewises. A cobbler was his bookbinder ; and the rougher the restoration, the greater the success.

" There were few modern volumes in his collection ;

and subsequently, such presentation copies as he received were wont to find their way into my own book-case, and often through eccentric channels. A Leigh Hunt, for instance, would come skimming to my feet through the branches of the apple-trees (our gardens were contiguous); or a Bernard Barton would be rolled downstairs after me, from the library door. *Marcian Colonna* [1] I remember finding on my window-sill, damp with the night's fog; and the *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies* I picked out of the strawberry-bed. It was not that Lamb was indifferent to the literary doings of his friends; but their books, as books, were unharmonious on his shelves. They clashed, both in outer and inner entity, with the Marlows and Miltons that were his household gods.

"When any notable visitors made their appearance at the cottage, Mary Lamb's benevolent tap at my window-pane seldom failed to summon me out, and I was presently ensconced in a quiet corner of their sitting-room, half hid in some great man's shadow. Of the discourse of these *dii majores* I have no recollection now; but the faces of some of them I can still partially recall. Hazlitt's, for instance, keen and aggressive, with eyes that flashed out epigram. Tom Hood's, a Methodist parson face: not a ripple breaking through the lines of it, though every word he dropped was a pun, and every pun roused a roar of laughter. Leigh Hunt's, parcel genial, parcel democratic, with as much rabid politics on his lips as honey from Mount Hybla. Miss Kelly's, plain, but engaging. (The most unprofessional of actresses, and unspoiled of women; the bloom of the child on her cheek, undefaced by the rouge, to speak in a metaphor.) She was one of the most dearly welcome of Lamb's guests. Wordsworth's, farmerish and respectable, but with something of the great poet occasionally breaking out and glorifying forehead and eyes.

[1] By Barry Cornwall.

"Then there was Martin Burney, ugliest of men, hugest of eaters, honestest of friends. I see him closeted with Mary Lamb, reading the Gospel of St. John *for the first time*. And Sheridan Knowles, burly and jovial, striding into Lamb's breakfast-room one spring morning—a great branch of May-blossom in his hand. And George Darley, scholar and poet—slow of speech and gentle of strain: Miss Kelly's constant shadow in her walks amongst the Enfield woodlands."

We have seen that Mary Lamb had taught Latin to Victoria Novello and William Hazlitt the younger, and later to Emma Isola; she also tended the young Latinity of Thomas Westwood. In his second batch of recollections, written in 1870, he says: "Excellent Bridget Elia! She was a good Latinist and a great devourer of novels, and I am proud to avow that my first knowledge of Latin and first taste for fiction both came from her. The late Mr. Moxon was in the habit at that time of sending the Lambs huge parcels of modern novels destined for sale, and therefore not to be cut open, nor long detained; and these, for economy of time, my old friend and I read together (Bridget in her arm-chair, myself kneeling on the floor), tunneling the pages we were not allowed to cut, and falling into a wonderful identity of selection as to what we should read and what skip."

In 1872 Mr. Westwood again returned to his pleasant task of setting down old Enfield memories. "I see the room now—the brisk fire in the grate—the lighted card-table some paces off—Charles and Mary Lamb and Emma Isola . . . seated round it, playing whist—the old books thronging the old shelves—the Titian and Da Vinci engravings on the walls, and in the spaces between Emma Isola's pretty copies, in Indian ink, of the prints in Bagster's edition of the *Compleat Angler*."

It is with Izaak Walton and fishing that Westwood's name is associated in literature; for he not only wrote

the *Chronicle of the Compleat Angler*, 1864, but he compiled with Thomas Satchell *Bibliotheca Piscatoria, a Catalogue of Books on Angling, the Fisheries and Fish Culture*, 1883, a monumental work invaluable to students of the gentle art. In the preface to the *Chronicle of the Compleat Angler* Westwood wrote of Lamb again: "In the ragged regiment of Lamb's book-tatterdemalions (a regiment I was permitted to manœuvre at will, though not much taller at the time than its tallest folio), was an early copy of the 'Compleat Angler,' I believe (for those were not bibliomaniacal days), Hawkins' edition of 1760. This was my chief treasure, my pearl of price; and, perched on the forked branch of an ancient apple-tree, in the little overgrown orchard, and at an elevation from which I could almost catch a glimpse of the marshy levels of the Lea itself, it was my delight to sally forth with Piscator, on that perennial May morning, to dib with him for 'logger-headed chub,' to listen to his discourse, to learn his songs by heart, to store up his precepts and to steep my boyish mind in the picturesque darkness of his manifold superstitions. Though no angler himself, Lamb was a lover of angling books, and I well remember his relating to me, as he paced to and fro, a quaint, scholastic figure, under the apple-tree aforesaid, how he had pounced upon his early copy, in some ramshackled repository of marine stores, and how grievous had been his disappointment in finding that its unlikely-looking owner knew as much of its mercantile value as himself."

In a little pamphlet of verse, published in 1884, entitled *Twelve Sonnets and an Epilogue*, Westwood again associated Lamb and Walton:—

> Two great and good men oft have trod your ground,
> Old "Totnam Hill"—one, Izaak, blythe of blee,
> Armed with the Fisher's pastoral panoply,
> Panier and Angle-rod, lissome and round;—
> The other, Elia, studious, quaint and fine,

With lustrous eye, brooding—one's fancy saith,—
On "spacious times of great Elizabeth,"
Peopled with retinue of Shades divine.
Izaak, I see, intent on mead and down—
On piping throstle and on blossomed spray;
But Elia's face is turned another way,
Drawn by the roar and tumult of the town.
Yet, did they meet, in sooth, those twain, what speech
Could gauge the gladness in the heart of each?

Of Westwood himself it is time to speak. He was born in 1814; writing to Wordsworth in January, 1830, Lamb says that old Mr. Westwood (Gaffer Westwood he called him) "sighs only now and then, when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about fifteen." This son Lamb was instrumental in placing in his friend Aders' office, and we may certainly attribute to the Lambs his interest in literature, which led him to vary his business career very agreeably with poetry and amateur literary work. One of his lyrics, "Love in the Alpuracas," was warmly praised by Landor, who even declared that he envied it. Westwood ultimately settled in Belgium, in a post of importance connected with a railway company, and he died there in 1888.

Until early in the year 1904 Enfield had one resident at any rate who remembered Lamb. This was the late Miss Louisa Vale, who for more than fifty years had a school a few doors from Lamb's house. Among her pupils were Thomas and Frances Westwood, the children of Lamb's landlord. The "Poplars," the Lambs' only independent Enfield house, was, said Miss Vale, much smaller in their day. Indeed it must have been, for it is now quite a large house, larger than would be needful for two such very modest people. Miss Vale, however, was too ardent a teetotaller quite to appreciate her neighbours, but she remembered that Lamb once called upon her, and was pleasant though odd. His growing fame, and the procession

of American pilgrims to Enfield, drawn thither by his connection with Chase Side, presented, I gather, some difficulty to Miss Vale's mind.

To return to the course of the year 1827, on October 4th is an interesting letter to Barron Field, declining a request that Lamb should write a description of the theatrical portraits in the collection of Charles Mathews, upon which he had lightly touched, in his best manner, in an essay on the old actors in the *London Magazine* some few years earlier. He replies: "I know my own utter unfitness for such a task. I am no hand at describing costumes, a great requisite in an account of mannered pictures. I have not the slightest acquaintance with pictorial language even. An imitator of me, or rather pretender to be *me*, in his Rejected Articles, has made me minutely describe the dresses of the poissardes at Calais![1]—I could as soon resolve Euclid. I have no eye for forms and fashions. I substitute analysis, and get rid of the phenomenon by slurring in for it its impression. I am sure you must have observed this defect, or peculiarity, in my writings; else the delight would be incalculable in doing such a thing for Mathews, whom I greatly like—and Mrs. Mathews, whom I almost greatlier like. What a feast 'twould be to be sitting at the pictures painting 'em into words; but I could almost as soon make words into pictures. I speak this deliberately, and not out of modesty. I pretty well know what I can't do."

The letter, continuing, gives us a sight of the Lambs' poor cousin the bookbinder. "My sister's verses are homely but just what they should be; I send them, not for the poetry, but the good sense and good-will of them.[2] I was beginning to transcribe; but Emma is sadly jealous of its getting into more hands, and I won't spoil it in her eyes by divulging it. Come to Enfield, and *read it*. As my poor cousin, the book-

[1] Patmore. See page 646.
[2] The sonnet on page 720.

binder, now with God, told me, most sentimentally, that having purchased a picture of fish at a dead man's sale, his heart ached to see how the widow grieved to part with it, being her dear husband's favourite: and he almost apologised for his generosity by saying he could not help telling the widow she was 'welcome to come and look at it'—e.g. at *his house*—'as often as she pleased.' There was the germ of generosity in an uneducated mind. He had just *reading* enough from the backs of books for the '*nec sinit esse feros*'—had he read inside, the same impulse would have led him to give back the two-guinea thing—with a request to see it, now and then, at *her* house. We are parroted into delicacy."

A letter from Crabb Robinson to Dorothy Wordsworth, dated December 3rd, 1827, contains a reference to the Lambs, and to the Album verses which I have quoted above: "I am sorry to inform you that poor Mary Lamb was taken ill some time back, and I have not heard of her restoration. Lamb went into the country early in the summer and was so delighted with Enfield that he took a house on the green—and in the changing about Miss L. was taken ill. I am sorry, independently of this, that L. should have taken such a step. The solitude is much too great for him. Yet he enjoyed his summer there greatly. He wrote a number of poems, he says, besides a comedy which I fear has been rejected by Covent Garden. In the chance that you may not have seen the Bijou I send you a poem by him which you will read with very mixed feelings of pleasure and pain."

On December 20th Lamb tells Allsop that they are comfortable again, and on the 22nd he assures Moxon that they "intend a delicious quiet Christmas day, dull and friendless." Two extracts from Robinson's *Diary* close the year:—

"December 26th, 1827:—Having heard from Charles Lamb that his sister was again well, I lost no time in

going to see them. And accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, I walked into the City and took the Edmonton stage and walked thence to Enfield. A fine ride. I found them in their new house—a small but comfortable place, and Charles Lamb quite delighted with his retirement. He fears not the solitude of the situation, though he seems to be almost without an acquaintance, and dreads rather than seeks visitors. We called on Mrs. [Antony] Robinson, who lives opposite; she was not at home, but came over and spent the evening . . . and made a fourth in a rubber of whist. I took a bed at a near public-house.

"December 27th :—I breakfasted with the Lambs, and they then accompanied me on my way through the Green Lanes. I had an agreeable walk home, reading on the way Roper's 'Life of Sir T. More.'"

CHAPTER XLVI

1828

A Quiet Year—The Cowden Clarkes at Enfield—Their Recollections of Lamb and his Sister—Mary Lamb's Appearance—An American Edition of *Elia*.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHT was a very quiet year, made more so by the absence of Emma Isola, who accepted, I imagine at the beginning of it, a situation as governess in the house of Mrs. Williams, the wife of the rector of Fornham, in Suffolk, near Bury St. Edmunds. Lamb's health does not seem to have improved. He began the year in a very poor state, and with the exception of acrostics and such trifles and a few unimportant letters, he wrote nothing.

Crabb Robinson again helps us a little :—

" April 4th, 1828 :—As soon as breakfast was over, I set out on a walk to Lamb's, whom I reached in three and a quarter hours—at one. . . . At Lamb's I found Moxon and Miss Kelly. Miss K. is an unaffected, sensible, clear-headed, warm-hearted woman. She has none of the vanities or arrogance of the actress. No one would suspect her profession from her conversation or manners. We talked about the French theatre, and dramatic matters in general. Mary Lamb and Charles were glad to have a dummy rubber, and also piquet with me. Moxon and I left at ten.

" May 21 :—At Talfourd's. The party consisted of the Lambs, Wordsworth, Miss Anne Rutt and 3 barristers, Shepherd, Malkin and Whitcomb. . . . Lamb in excellent spirits but without extravagance. Wordsworth not very chatty but seemed pleased with Lamb.

. . . I brought Lamb to my chambers, where he took Hollands and water and sat up late.

"May 22 :—Rose early, and finding Lamb bent on going away, made up a fire and breakfast for him, and accompanied him to the Enfield stage, loading him with books, and a print of Blake's Chaucer's pilgrims."

A note to Cary in June tells how little fitted Lamb had become for London dinner parties : "I long to see Wordsworth once more before he goes hence, but it would be at the expense of health and comfort my infirmities cannot afford. Once only I have been at a dinner party, to meet him, for a whole year past, and I do not know that I am not the worse for it now. There is a necessity for my drinking too much (don't show this to the Bishop of ——, your friend) at and after dinner ; then I require spirits at night to allay the crudity of the weaker Bacchus ; and in the morning I cool my parched stomach with a fiery libation. Then I am aground in town, and call upon my London friends, and get new wets of ale, porter, etc. ; then ride home, drinking where the coach stops, as duly as Edward set up his Waltham Crosses. This, or near it, was the process of my experiment of dining at Talfourd's to meet Wordsworth, and I am not well now. Now let me beg that we may meet here with assured safety to both sides. Darley and Procter come here on Sunday morning ; pray arrange to come along with them. Here I can be tolerably moderate. In town, the very air of town turns my head and is intoxication enough, if intoxication knew a limit."

To the circumstance that after their wedding on July 5th, 1828, Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke spent their honeymoon at Enfield, unknown to the Lambs, we owe some very agreeable reminiscences of the brother and sister at a slightly later period. In the words of the Cowden Clarkes' *Recollections of Writers*, "Dear Charles and Mary Lamb, who were then residing at Chase Side, Enfield, paid us the compliment of affect-

ing to take it a little in dudgeon that we should not have let them know when we 'lurked at the Greyhound' so near to them; but his own letter, written soon after that time, shows how playfully and how kindly he really took this 'stealing a match before one's face.' He made us promise to repair our transgression by coming to spend a week or ten days with him and his sister; and gladly did we avail ourselves of the offered pleasure under name of reparation.

"During the forenoons and afternoons of this memorable visit we used to take the most enchanting walks in all directions of the lovely neighbourhood. Over by Winchmore Hill, through Southgate Wood to Southgate and back: on one occasion stopping at a village linendraper's shop that stood in the hamlet of Winchmore Hill, that Mary Lamb might make purchase of some little household requisite she needed; and Charles Lamb, hovering near with us, while his sister was being served by the mistress of the shop, addressed her, in a tone of mock sympathy, with the words, 'I hear that trade's falling off, Mrs. Udall, how's this?' The stout, good-natured matron only smiled, as accustomed to Lamb's whimsical way, for he was evidently familiarly known at the houses where his sister dealt. Another time a longer excursion was proposed, when Miss Lamb declined accompanying us, but said she would meet us on our return, as the walk was farther than she thought she could manage. It was to Northaw; through charming lanes, and country by-roads, and we went hoping to see a famous old giant oak-tree there. . . . Mary Lamb was as good as her word—when was she otherwise? and came to join us on our way back and be with us on our reaching home, there to make us comfortable in old-fashion easy-chairs for 'a good rest' before dinner.

"The evenings were spent in cosy talk; Lamb often taking his pipe, as he sat by the fire-side, and puffing quietly between the intervals of discussing some choice

book, or telling some racy story, or uttering some fine, thoughtful remark. On the first evening of our visit he had asked us if we could play whist, as he liked a rubber ; but on our confessing to very small skill at the game, he said, ' Oh, then, you're right not to play ; I hate playing with bad players.' . . . His style of playful bluntness when speaking to his intimates was strangely pleasant—nay, welcome : it gave you the impression of his liking you well enough to be rough and unceremonious with you ; it showed you that he felt at home with you. It accorded with what you knew to be at the root of an ironical assertion he made —that he always gave away gifts, parted with presents, and *sold* keepsakes.[1] It underlay in sentiment the drollery and reversed truth of his saying to us, ' I always call my sister Maria when we are alone together, Mary when we are with our friends, and Moll before the servants.' "

Talfourd also draws attention to Lamb's playful and loving rudenesses to his sister : " He would touch the inmost pulse of profound affection, and then break off in some jest, which would seem profane ' to ears polite,' but carry as profound a meaning to those who had the right key, as his most pathetic suggestions ; and where he loved and doted most, he would vent the overflowing of his feelings in words that looked like rudeness. He touches on this strange resource of love in his ' Farewell to Tobacco,' in a passage which may explain some startling freedoms with those he himself loved most dearly.

[1] A grain of truth in it too. John Chambers' recollections of Lamb, from which I have already quoted, tell us that he was once presented with a handsome watch by a friend who had noticed that he lacked one. On the next day he was watchless as ever, and on being asked where it was he replied laconically, " Pawned." We have also seen him, in Thomas Westwood's reminiscences, pitching presentation copies of his friends' books into the garden. And Moxon relates that he threw at a passing hackney coachman the acorns from an ilex on Virgil's tomb which a pious pilgrim had given to him.

" ——Irony all, and feign'd abuse,
Such as perplext lovers use,
At a need, when, in despair
To paint forth their fairest fair,
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike,
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of Dearest Miss,
Jewel, Honey, Sweetheart, Bliss,
And those forms of old admiring,
Call her Cockatrice and Siren,
Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, Hyena, Mermaid, Devil,
Ethiop, Wench, and Blackamoor,
Monkey, Ape, and twenty more;
Friendly Trait'ress, loving Foe,—
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express,
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot
Whether it be pain or not.

Thus, in the very excess of affection to his sister, whom he loved above all else on earth, he would sometimes address to her some words of seeming reproach, yet so tinged with a humorous irony that none but an entire stranger could mistake his drift."

In the recollections of Lamb by Mrs. Balmanno, from which I quote in the previous chapter, she describes a visit from the Lambs to herself and mentions a piece of mischievous rudeness on Lamb's part which covered his sister with confusion. Later in the evening he atoned for it and all was well again. Hood subsequently told Mrs. Balmanno that after a period when Lamb's jokes at his sister's expense had been rather more numerous than usual Lamb made up his mind to stop them. He behaved for a few days "admirably," until Miss Lamb asked him with tears what she had done that he should be so cruel.

There is, as Talfourd says, a familiarity that to a stranger unacquainted with the character of the speaker

seems thoughtless or even worse; yet here, as in so many other cases, to know all is to forgive all. The example cited by Mrs. Balmanno is on the face of it certainly not pretty, and I am not concerned to defend it; but, without having seen Lamb's expression and heard his tones, one would not dare—knowing what we do of him—to condemn it. Some men may say anything, smoothing their rudeness with a rectifying smile, and Charles Lamb was chief of them. But in any case he and his sister, being two old humorists of lifelong intimacy, were enfranchised beyond ordinary folk.

In a book published in America entitled *Letters to an Enthusiast*, consisting of letters written by Mrs. Cowden Clarke to Mrs. Balmanno's son, I find this passage: "You ask me if I knew Charles Lamb. I thank God, I did. This very enthusiasm about the malt beverage reminds me of pleasant things in my privileged intercourse with him. I was an honoured partaker in one of those country walks of his, when he would stop at some little roadside inn, and have some cool porter. He preferred porter to ale, and I remember his especially expressing his approval of my taste when I ventured to second his commendation of Barclay and Perkins's porter as superior to any other brewers'. I think he liked that a girl should have an opinion in porter, and not be afraid of avowing it. . . .

"In one of these green lane walks, admirable Miss Kelly happened to be at Enfield with us that day; and I remember his being pleased that both she and I sat in the little porch and pledged him, while he had the beer brought there. He always liked to see women superior to fine ladyism and affectation, though no one had a truer appreciation of real feminine refinement. I recollect his trying me with one of his whimsical ways in that kind of test once. Charles and I were down at Enfield for a few days, and went one evening

with himself and his beloved sister Mary to drink tea with some people who had invited them both. Charles Lamb and I chanced to outwalk my Charles and Miss Lamb, and we arrived first at the house, a ladies' school. The lady of the house received us politely, and expressed herself pleased to see—bowing to me—any friend of Mr. Lamb's with him. He answered her inquiry after his sister, by saying that she had a horrible toothache, and had stayed at home; and Mr. C. C. had remained to keep her company. And then he added, 'His wife and I, as we came along, were hoping that you might have sprats for supper to-night, Mrs. ——.' You might imagine the effect that this produced, in a somewhat prim company-assemblage; but I could see that he was pleased at my not being in the slightest discomposed at this singular introduction to a strange lady, in a strange house."

And here is another passage from the Cowden Clarkes' pages: "He was so proud of his pedestrian feats and indefatigability, that he once told the Cowden Clarkes a story of a dog possessed by a pertinacious determination to follow him day by day when he went forth to wander in the Enfield lanes and fields; until, unendurably teased by the pertinacity of this obtrusive animal, he determined to get rid of him by fairly *tiring him out*! So he took him a circuit of many miles, including several of the loveliest spots round Enfield, coming at last to a by-road with an interminable vista of uphill distance where the dog turned tail, gave the matter up, and lay down beneath a hedge, panting, exhausted, thoroughly worn out and dead beat; while his defeater walked freshly home, smiling and triumphant."

The Cowden Clarkes relate, as an instance of Lamb's sympathy with dumb creatures, that they saw him "get up from table, while they were dining with him and his sister at Enfield, open the street door, and give admittance to a stray donkey into the front strip of garden, where there was a grass-plot, which he said

seemed to possess more attraction for the creature than the short turf of the common on Chase-side, opposite to the house where the Lambs then dwelt."

To come to more intimate matters, Charles Lamb, says Cowden Clarke, "had three striking personal peculiarities: his eyes were of different colours, one being greyish blue, the other brownish hazel; his hair was thick, retaining its abundance and its dark-brown hue with scarcely a single grey hair among it until even the latest period of his life; and he had a smile of singular sweetness and beauty.

"Miss Lamb bore a strong personal resemblance to, her brother; being in stature under middle height possessing well-cut features, and a countenance of singular sweetness, with intelligence. Her brown eyes were soft, yet penetrating; her nose and mouth very shapely; while the general expression was mildness itself. She had a speaking-voice, gentle and persuasive; and her smile was her brother's own—winning in the extreme. There was a certain catch, or emotional breathingness, in her utterance, which gave an inexpressible charm to her reading of poetry, and which lent a captivating earnestness to her mode of speech when addressing those she liked. This slight check, with its yearning, eager effect in her voice, had something softenedly akin to her brother Charles's impediment of articulation: in him it scarcely amounted to a stammer; in her it merely imparted additional stress to the fine-sensed suggestions she made to those whom she counselled or consoled. She had a mind at once nobly-toned and practical, making her ever a chosen source of confidence among her friends, who turned to her for consolation, confirmation, and advice, in matters of nicest moment, always secure of deriving from her both aid and solace. Her manner was easy, almost homely, so quiet, unaffected, and perfectly unpretending was it. Beneath the sparing talk and retired carriage, few casual observers would have sus-

pected the ample information and large intelligence that lay comprised there. She was oftener a listener than a speaker. In the modest-havioured woman simply sitting there, taking small share in general conversation, few who did not know her would have imagined the accomplished classical scholar, the excellent understanding, the altogether rarely-gifted being, morally and mentally, that Mary Lamb was.

"Her apparel was always of the plainest kind; a black stuff or silk gown, made and worn in the simplest fashion. She took snuff liberally—a habit that had evidently grown out of her propensity to sympathize with and share all her brother's tastes; and it certainly had the effect of enhancing her likeness to him. She had a small, white, and delicately-formed hand; and as it hovered about the tortoise-shell box containing the powder so strongly approved by them both, in search of the stimulating pinch, the act seemed yet another link of association between the brother and sister, when hanging together over their favourite books and studies. . . .

"There was a certain old-world fashion in Mary Lamb's diction which gave it a most natural and quaintly pleasant effect, and which heightened rather than detracted from the more heartfelt or important things she uttered. She had a way of repeating her brother's words assentingly when he spoke to her." [1]

Of the brother and sister alone, or with only one or

[1] In a copy of Procter's Memoir of Lamb which belonged to Cowden Clarke, and has been lent to me by Mr. F. G. Edwards, are many pencilled notes and marks of approbation or difference, by C. C. C. I quote two or three: "I heard him [Lamb] say that he could not name a standard quotation in all the Waverley novels. But he greatly admired—as a story—*Kenilworth*. . . . He once depreciated *Rosamund Gray* to me, saying that he wrote it in imitation of Mackenzie [*Julie de Roubigné*]. . . . At times he [Lamb] would take pleasure in worrying Godwin [who had begun as a Minister of the Gospel]. I once heard him call out, 'Godwin, I have your volume of *Sermons* up there.'"

two friends, Procter thus writes: "Charles Lamb sate, when at home, always near the table. At the opposite side was his sister, engaged in some domestic work, knitting or sewing,or poring over a modern novel. 'Bridget in some things is behind her years.' In fact although she was ten years older than her brother, she had more sympathy with modern books and with youthful fancies than he had. She wore a neat cap, of the fashion of her youth; an old-fashioned dress. Her face was pale and somewhat square; but very placid; with gray intelligent eyes. She was very mild in her manner to strangers; and to her brother gentle and tender, always. She had often an upward look of peculiar meaning, when directed towards him; as though to give him assurance that all was then well with her. His affection for her was somewhat less on the surface; but always present. There was great gratitude intermingled with it."

Mary Victoria Cowden Clarke died in 1898, full of years, only a short time after the publication of her autobiography *My Long Life*. Her claim to an honoured place in English literature rests upon her *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare*. Her husband Charles Cowden Clarke was born in 1787, and was thus twelve years younger than Lamb. His father kept a school at Enfield, moving thither from Northampton, where, as we have seen, he had had as fellow usher George Dyer. Among Clarke's Enfield pupils was John Keats, whom Charles Cowden Clarke knew intimately; another Enfield scholar was Edward Holmes, the writer on Mozart, who became a pupil of Novello and was known to Lamb. Cowden Clarke joined his father-in-law Vincent Novello in business, wrote some pleasant books, edited (his finest achievement) Nyren's *Young Cricketer's Tutor*, lectured, read publicly from Shakespeare, became intimate with Dickens, and after a life of sunny popularity died in 1877.

Blackwood published Lamb's little play "The Wife's

rial" in the number for December, 1828. Writing
o Procter Lamb says: "Blackwood sent me £20
or the drama. Somebody cheated me out of it next
ay; and my new pair of breeches, just sent home,
cacking at first putting on, I exclaimed, in my wrath,
'All tailors are cheats, and all men are tailors.' Then
was better."

As in 1827, so in 1828, an extract from Crabb Robinson's *Diary* brings the year to a close: "December 3th:—I dined with Charles and Mary Lamb, and fter dinner had a long spell at dummy whist with hem. When they went to bed, I read a little drama y Lamb, 'The Intruding Widow' ['The Wife's Trial'], hich appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*. It is a piece f great feeling, but quite unsuitable for performance, here being no action whatever in it."

Elia, as I have said, did not become popular in ngland until long after Lamb's death, but in America, here it was published in 1828, it so pleased its readers hat the publishers, Carey, Lea and Carey, of Philalelphia, hastened to issue a Second Series of their wn compiling, made up, in their generosity, not only f Lamb's prose, from the *Works* and the *London Magazine*, but also of three essays of which he was uiltless, the work of Allan Cunningham and Procter. n conversation with Lamb in 1834, as we shall see, Nathaniel Parker Willis discovered that his American uccess gratified Lamb not a little, and he was well leased with the unauthorised Second Series, even hough a mistake had been made.

CHAPTER XLVII

1829

A Revival of Good Spirits—Emma Isola's Album—Lamb's Choice of Old Poetry—"The Gypsy's Malison"—A Joke upon Crabb Robinson—Crabb Robinson at Enfield—Becky the Tyrant—Mary Lamb's Illness—Lamb Alone—"Leisure" and a Recantation—Housekeeping Given Up—The Westwoods—A Godson—A Short Way with Bankrupts—Lamb in the Political Arena.

IF we may judge by the letters, which become full of fun again, the year 1829 began in better spirits. But in July Mary Lamb was again taken ill, and again the attack was a very long one and her brother's sufferings consequently were severe. She was now, it must be remembered, sixty-five years of age, and thus less able to withstand her malady.

In one of the first letters of 1829—to Procter on January 19th—Lamb asks for some verses for Emma Isola's album; "a girl of gold" he calls her. In the next he says: "Don't trouble yourself about the verses. Take 'em coolly as they come. Any day between this and Midsummer will do. Ten lines the extreme. There is no mystery in my incognita. She has often seen you, though you may not have observed a silent brown girl, who for the last twelve years [only eight years, I think], has run wild about our house in her Christmas holidays. She is Italian by name and extraction." Lamb always wrote charmingly of his adopted daughter. "Beautiful in reconciliation" is a phrase he applies to her in a letter to Moxon.

Emma Isola's album, for which so many of Lamb's friends wrote poems, no longer exists in its original form; the more valuable pages were cut out to be sold singly as autographs. But in addition to the

album, Miss Isola possessed an extract book which Lamb made for her, largely with his own hand, and this book was in 1905 in the possession of the Misses Moxon, Emma Isola's daughters, who allowed me to examine it. In addition to original matter it contains, in Lamb's writing, a number of well-known poems, and of these I add a list, since it seems to me very interesting to know the kind of poetry which so fine a critic prescribed for a youthful reader.

"The Female Phaeton."—Prior.
"The Garland."—Prior.
"A Song in Commemoration of Music" ("When whispering strains do softly steal").—Strode.
"Love me not for comely grace."—From Wilbye's *Madrigals*, 1609.
"Love."—Coleridge.
"A Fair and Happy Milkmaid."—Sir T. Overbury.
"Fair Helen of Kirkconnel."
"The Prioress to Fair Millicent" (from the old play of "The Merry Devil of Edmonton").
"To the Dying Soul."—Prior.

SONNET

Written on seeing Bewick's *Chalk Drawing of the Head of* Hazlitt

By Sheridan Knowles

Thus Hazlitt looked! There's life in every line!
Soul—language—fire that colour could not give,
See! on that brow how pale-robed thought divine,
In an embodied radiance seems to live!
Ah! in the gaze of that entranced eye,
Humid, yet burning, there beams passion's flame,
Lighting the cheek, and quivering through the frame;
While round the lips, the odour of a sigh
Yet hovers fondly, and its shadow sits
Beneath the channel of the glowing thought
And fire-clothed eloquence, which comes in fits
Like Pythiac inspiration!——Bewick, taught
By thee, in vain doth slander's venom'd dart
Do its foul work 'gainst *him*. This head *must* own a heart.

"Cherries."—Drummond.
"On a Drop of Dew."—Marvell.
"Lucy and Colin."—Tickell.
"To a Bird that haunted the waters of Lacken."—Thurlow.

"To the Nightingale."—Moxon.
"To a Child of Quality."—Prior.
"Sir John Grahame and Barbara Allen."
"O Waly Waly up the Bank."
"Sir Patrick Spence."
"The Spanish Lady's Love."
"The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn."—Marvell
"Goff's Oak."—Moxon.
"Tweed Side."
"Darby and Joan."
"To a Robin Redbreast."
"The Angler's Wish."—Walton.
"The Milkmaid's Song" (from Walton's *Angler*).—Marlowe.
"The Milkmaid's Mother's Answer" (from the same).—Raleigh.
"Christy."—Scotch Song.
"The Muse a Consolation."—Wither.
"Bermudas."—Marvell.
"Young Love."—Marvell.
"Go, Lovely Rose."—Waller.
"To my Young Lady, Lucy Sidney."—Waller.

In the letter to Procter of January 22nd Lamb draws attention to his fine sonnet in a new manner, one of the best of his later poems, entitled "The Gypsy's Malison," of which he writes more freely a week later :—

"Jan. 29th, 1829.

"When Miss Ouldcroft (who is now Mrs. Beddome, and Bed—dom'd to her!) was at Enfield, which she was in summertime, and owed her health to its sun and genial influences, she visited (with young lady-like impertinence) a poor man's cottage that had a pretty baby (O the yearnling!) and gave it fine caps and sweetmeats. On a day, broke into the parlour our two maids uproarious. 'O ma'am, who do you think Miss Ouldcroft (they pronounce it Holcroft) has been working a cap for?' 'A child,' answered Mary, in true Shandean female simplicity. 'It's the man's child as was taken up for sheep-stealing.' Miss Ouldcroft was staggered, and would have cut the connection; but by main force I made her go and take her leave of her protégée (which I only spell with a g because I can't make a pretty j). I thought, if she went no

more, the Abactor or Abactor's wife (vide Ainsworth) would suppose she had heard something; and I have delicacy for a sheep-stealer. The overseers actually overhauled a mutton-pie at the baker's (his first, last, and only hope of mutton-pie), which he never came to eat, and thence inferred his guilt. *Per occasionem cujus* I framed the sonnet; observe its elaborate construction. I was four days about it.

"THE GYPSY'S MALISON

"Suck, baby, suck, Mother's love grows by giving,
Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
Black Manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.
Kiss, baby, kiss, Mother's lips shine by kisses,
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
Black Manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
Tend thee the kiss that poisons 'mid caressings.
Hang, baby, hang, mother's love loves such forces,
Choke the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
Black Manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging.

So sang a wither'd Sibyl energetical,
And bann'd the ungiving door with lips prophetical.

"Barry, study that sonnet. It is curiously and perversely elaborate. 'Tis a choking subject, and therefore the reader is directed to the stricture [structness] of it. See you? and was this a fourteener to be rejected by a trumpery annual? forsooth, 'twould shock all mothers; and may all mothers, who would so be shocked, bed-dom'd! as if mothers were such sort of logicians as to infer the future hanging of *their* child from the theoretical hangibility (or capacity of being hanged, if the judge pleases) of every infant born with a neck on. Oh B. C., my whole heart is faint, and my whole head is sick (how is it?) at this damned, canting, unmasculine age!"

Miss Ouldcroft, it should be explained, was Louisa Holcroft, who had just married Carlyle's Birmingham friend Badams, the chemist. To return to Lamb's first

letter to Procter concerning the sonnet (which was printed in *Blackwood* for January, 1829)—" 'Twas written for the *Gem*, but the editors declined it, on the plea that it would *shock all mothers* ; so they published ' The Widow,' instead.[1] I am born out of time. I have no conjecture about what the present world calls delicacy. I thought *Rosamund Gray* was a pretty modest thing. Hessey assures me that the world would not bear it. I have lived to grow into an indecent character. When my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, ' Damn the age ! I will write for Antiquity ! ' "

In April Lamb's spirits were still sufficiently high to send Robinson a mischievous letter congratulating him on his good health and describing the rheumatic pains from which Lamb was suffering—the joke being that Lamb was well and hearty and Robinson in an agony. A day or so later a second letter followed :—

" I do confess to mischief. It was the subtlest diabolical piece of malice, heart of man has contrived. I have no more rheumatism than that poker. Never was freer from all pains and aches. Every joint sound, to the tip of the ear from the extremity of the lesser toe. The report of thy torments was blown circuitously here from Bury. I could not resist the jeer. I conceived you writhing, when you should just receive my congratulations. How mad you'd be. Well, it is not in my method to inflict pangs. I leave that to heaven. But in the existing pangs of a friend, I have a share. His disquietude crowns my exemption. . . .

" You never was rack'd, was you ? I should like an authentic map of those feelings.

" You seem to have the flying gout.

" You can scarcely scrue a smile out of your face—can you ? I sit at immunity, and sneer *ad libitum*.

[1] " The Widow " was a parody of Lamb's style by Hood, in the *Gem*, 1829.

" 'Tis now the time for you to make good resolutions. I may go on breaking 'em, for any thing the worse I find myself.

" Your Doctor seems to keep you on the long cure. Precipitate healings are never good.

" Don't come while you are so bad. I shan't be able to attend to your throes and the dumbee at once.

" I should like to know how slowly the pain goes off. But don't write, unless the motion will be likely to make your sensibility more exquisite.

" Your affectionate and truly healthy friend

C. Lamb.

" Mary thought a Letter from me might amuse you in your torment."

On May 8th Robinson, now recovered, paid his tor mentor a visit. His *Diary* has the following entries :—

" May 8th, 1829 :—Went by the early coach to Enfield, being on the road from half-past eight till nearly eleven. Lamb was from home a great part of the morning. I spent the whole of the day with L. and his sister, without going out of the house, except for a mile before dinner with Miss Lamb, and the greater part of the day was as usual spent over whist. I had plenty of books to lounge over.

" May 9th :—Nearly the whole day within doors. I merely sunned myself at noon on the beautiful Enfield Green. . . . Of course great part of the time we were at dummy whist, and the rest of the day I was looking over a great number of Lamb's [books] of which no small number are curious. He throws away indeed all modern books, but retains the trash he liked when a boy. Looked over a ' Life of Congreve,' one of Curll's infamous publications, containing nothing. The first edition of the ' Rape of the Lock,' with the machinery. It is curious to observe the improvements in the versification. Colley Cibber's pamphlets against Pope, only

flippant and disgusting—nothing worth notice. Read the beginnings of two wretched novels. Lamb and his sister were both in a fidget to-day by the departure of their old servant Becky, who had been with them many years, but, being ill-tempered, had been a plague and a tyrant to them. Yet Miss Lamb was frightened at the idea of a *new* servant. However, their new maid, a cheerful, healthy girl, gave them spirits, and all the next day Lamb was rejoicing at the change. Moxon came very late.

"May 10th :—All the forenoon in the back room with the Lambs, except that I went out to take a place in the evening stage. About noon Talfourd came : and had walked. Moxon, after a long walk, returned also to dinner, and we had an agreeable chat between dinner and tea. At 6 I went back to London on the stage."

Of Becky, for so long the Lambs' servant and tyrant, the chief historian (as of Dash) is Patmore. He writes : "At Islington, and afterwards at Enfield, they had a favourite servant—'Becky.' She was an excellent person in all respects ; and not the worse that she had not the happiness of comprehending the difference between genius and common sense,—between 'an author' and an ordinary man. Accordingly, having a real regard for her master and mistress, she used not seldom to take the liberty of telling them 'a bit of her mind,' when they did anything 'odd,' or out of the common way. And as (to do them justice) their whole life and behaviour were as little of a common-place as could well be, Becky had plenty of occasions for the exercise of her self-imposed task, of instructing her master and mistress in the ways of the world ! Becky, too, had the advantage of previous experience in observing and treating the vagaries of extraordinary men ; for she had lived for some years with Hazlitt before she went to the Lambs. The consequence was, that though, so far as I ever heard or observed, she

was never wanting in any one particular of her duties and office, she was very apt to overstep them, and trench on those of her master and mistress. In performing the *métier* of housekeeping, the Lambs were something like an excellent person of my acquaintance, who, when a tradesman brings him home a pair of particularly well-fitting boots, or any other object perfectionated in a manner that peculiarly takes his fancy, inquires the price, and if it happens to be at all within tradesmanlike bounds, says, 'No: I cannot give you that price, it is too little—I shall give you so and so,'—naming a third or fourth more than the price demanded! Now, if the Lambs' baker, for example, had charged them (as, it is said, bakers will) a dozen loaves in the weekly bill, when they must have known that they had eaten only half that number, the last thing they would have thought of was complaining of the overcharge. If they had not consumed the proper quantity to pay for the trouble of serving them, it was not the baker's fault; and the least they could do was to pay for it!

"Now this was a kind of logic utterly incomprehensible to Becky, and she would not hear of it. Her master and mistress had a right to be as extravagant as they pleased; but they had no right to confound the distinctions between honesty and roguery, and it was what she could not permit. Nor must it be wondered at if she failed to recognise and admit the intellectual pretentions of persons who were evidently so behind the rest of the world in the knowledge of these first rudiments of household duties. Now there are few of us who would not duly prize a domestic with wit and honesty enough to protect us from the consequences of our own carelessness or indifference. But who is there who, like Lamb, without caring one farthing for the advantages he might gain by Becky's blunt honesty, would not merely overlook, but be even pleased and amused by the ineffable airs of superiority

which she gave herself, on the strength of her superior genius for going the best way to market? The truth is, that Becky used to take unwarrantable liberties, which every one who visited the Lambs must have observed; though scarcely any could have known, or even guessed at, her grounds for doing so. Yet I never heard a complaint or a harsh word uttered of her, much less *to* her; and I believe there was no inconvenience, privation, or expense, that they would not have put up with rather than exchange her honest roughness for the servile civility of anybody else.

"I remember a trifling incident, which showed the interest the Lambs took in the welfare of this young woman, whom no one else, had she persisted in treating them personally as she did the Lambs, would have kept in their house a week, though she had been the best servant in the world. Her father, an interesting and excellent old man, had, from his advancing years, been thrown out of his ordinary employment as a porter and warehouseman, and had no means of support, but what his daughter could allow him. During this time he used to be constantly at the Lambs' and they had taken great trouble, and used every means, to get him into some situation; but in vain. At last (for it was quite at an early period of my acquaintance with them) they asked me if I could do anything for him; having, as they said, teazed and bored all their other and older friends without success. I happened to have the means of putting him into a comfortable situation almost immediately; and I doubt if this trifling service had not more merit in Lamb's eyes, and did not afford him more real pleasure in bringing it about, than any one of the more important acts of benefit that he had been the medium of performing, for those personal friends in whom he felt an interest.

"At last Becky left them, to be married; and I

believe this circumstance, more than anything else, was the cause of their giving up house-keeping ; which they did shortly afterwards."

During May, 1829, Mary Lamb was again taken ill ; she was still ill on June 3rd, when Lamb sent Barton news of the death of young Dibdin ; and still ill on July 25th, the date of his next and very melancholy letter to the same friend. " I have had the loneliest time near 10 weeks, broken by a short apparition of Emma for her holydays, whose departure only deepend the returning solitude, and by 10 days I have past in Town. But Town, with all my native hankering after it, is not what it was. The streets, the shops are left, but all old friends are gone. And in London I was frightfully convinced of this as I past houses and places —empty caskets now. I have ceased to care almost about any body. The bodies I cared for are in graves, or dispersed. My old Clubs, that lived so long and flourish'd so steadily, are crumbled away. When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 'twas heavy unfeeling rain, and I had no where to go. Home have I none—and not a sympathising house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of the heaven pour down on a forlorner head. Yet I tried 10 days at a sort of a friend's house, but it was large and straggling—one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card players, pleasant companions—that have tumbled to pieces into dust and other things—and I got home on Thursday, convinced that I was better to get home to my hole at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner.

" Less than a month I hope will bring home Mary. She is at Fulham, looking better in her health than ever, but sadly rambling, and scarce showing any pleasure in seeing me, or curiosity when I should come again. But the old feelings will come back again, and we shall drown old sorrows over a game at Picquet

again. But 'tis a tedious cut out of a life of sixty four, to lose twelve or thirteen weeks every year or two. And to make me more alone, our illtemperd maid is gone, who with all her airs, was yet a home piece of furniture, a record of better days ; the young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing—and I have no one here to talk over old matters with. Scolding and quarreling have something of familiarity and a community of interest —they imply acquaintance—they are of resentment, which is of the family of dearness. I can neither scold nor quarrel at this insignificant implement of household services ; she is less than a cat, and just better than a deal Dresser. What I can do, and do overdo, is to walk, but deadly long are the days—these summer all-day days, with but a half hours candlelight and no firelight. . . .

" I pity you for over-work, but I assure you no-work is worse. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I brag'd formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit. With few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off, that flags me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inchmeal just now. But the snake is vital. Well, I shall write merrier anon." (The brag of which Lamb was thinking was probably his sonnet " Leisure " printed in the *London Magazine* for April, 1821 :—

> They talk of time, and of time's galling yoke,
> That like a mill-stone on man's mind doth press,
> Which only works and business can redress :
> Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,
> Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
> But might I, fed with silent meditation,
> Assoiled live from that fiend Occupation—
> *Improbus Labor*, which my spirits hath broke—
> I'd drink of time's rich cup, and never surfeit:

Fling in more days than went to make the gem,
That crown'd the white top of Methusalem:
Yea on my weak neck take, and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burthen of eternity.)

I do not know who the friend was with whom Lamb stayed in London. Robinson having gone to Rome in June, we have no information—on September 22nd Mary Lamb was at home again, but, as Lamb told Moxon, in "the saddest low spirits that ever poor creature had" and unable to see any one. A month later a note to Gillman tells of the step which the brother and sister believed to be necessary. "We have had a sorry house of it here. Our spirits have been reduced till we were at hope's end what to do—obliged to quit this house, and afraid to engage another, till in extremity I took the desperate resolve of kicking house and all down, like Bunyan's pack; and here we are in a new life at board and lodging, with an honest couple our neighbours. We have ridded ourselves of the cares of dirty acres; and the change, though of less than a week, has had the most beneficial effects on Mary already. She looks two years and a half younger for it. But we have had sore trials."

The honest couple were Thomas Westwood and his wife, the parents of the Thomas Westwood whose interesting reminiscences of the Lambs I have already quoted. They lived next door to the Lambs, in a house which still stands, although it has been changed externally. The Lambs' sitting-room, leading into the garden, is, however, much as it was. The house is now called "Westwood Cottage." I quote, from the famous letter to Wordsworth of January 22nd, 1830, the description of Lamb's landlord: "And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton Stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We

do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a punctum stans. The seasons pass us with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom, Autumn hath foregone its moralities, they are hey-pass repass [as] in a show-box. Yet as far as last year occurs back, for they scarce shew a reflex now, they make no memory as heretofore,—'twas sufficiently gloomy. Let the sullen nothing pass.

"Suffice it that after sad spirits prolonged thro' many of its months, as it called them, we have cast our skins, have taken a farewell of the pompous troublesome trifle calld housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door with an old couple, the Baucis and Baucida of dull Enfield. Here we have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them, with the garden but to see it grow, with the tax gatherer but to hear him knock, with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how, quietists, confiding ravens. We have the otium pro dignitate, a respectable insignificance. Yet in the self condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite kill'd, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleetmarket, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health? intolerable dulness. What by early hours and moderate meals?—a total blank. O never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the chearful haunts of streets—or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I could gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snorings of the Seven Sleepers, but to have a little teazing image of a town about one, country folks that do not look like country folks, shops two yards square—half a dozen apples and two penn'orth of overlookd ginger-

bread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford Street—and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the shew-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travel'd (marry, they must begin to be conscious of the Red Gauntlet), to have a new plasterd flat church, and to be wishing that it was but a Cathedral. The very blackguards here are degenerate. The topping gentry, stock brokers. The passengers too many to ensure your quiet, or let you go about whistling, or gaping—too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet Street. Confining, room-keeping thickest winter is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country, but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture can plunge myself into Saint Giles's. O let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet and recreative study, can make the country any thing better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinn'd himself out of it. Thence followd Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions. . . .

"Mary must squeeze out a line propriâ manu, but indeed her fingers have been incorrigibly nervous to letter writing for a long interval. 'Twill please you all to hear that, tho' I fret like a lion in a net, her present health and spirits are better than they have been for some time past: she is absolutely three years and a half younger, as I tell her, since we have adopted this boarding plan.

"Our providers are an honest pair, dame Westwood and her husband—he, when the light of prosperity

shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow Bells, retired since with something under a competence, writes himself parcel gentleman, hath borne parish offices, sings fine old sea songs at threescore and ten, sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about 15, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world, and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, ' I have married my daughter however,'—takes the weather as it comes, outsides it to town in severest season, and a' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature, how comfortable to author-rid folks ! and has *one anecdote*, upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age. It was how he was a *rider* in his youth, travelling for shops, and once (not to baulk his employer's bargain) on a sweltering day in August, rode foaming into Dunstable upon a *mad horse* to the dismay and expostulary wonderment of innkeepers, ostlers &c. who declared they would not have bestrid the beast to win the Darby. Understand the creature gall'd to death and desperation by gad flies, cormorants winged, worse than beset Inachus' daughter. This he tells, this he brindles and burnishes on a' winter's eves, 'tis his star of set glory, his rejuvenescence to descant upon. Far from me be it (dii avertant) to look a gift story in the mouth, or cruelly to surmise (as those who doubt the plunge of Curtius) that the inseparate conjuncture of man and beast, the centaur-phenomenon that staggerd all Dunstable, might have been the effect of unromantic necessity, that the horse-part carried the reasoning, willy nilly, that needs must when such a devil drove, that certain spiral configurations in the frame of Thomas Westwood unfriendly to alighting, made the alliance more forcible than voluntary. Let him enjoy his fame for me, nor let me hint a whisper that shall dismount Bellerophon. Put case he was an involuntary martyr, yet if in the fiery conflict he buckled

the soul of a constant haberdasher to him, and adopted his flames, let Accident and He share the glory! You would all like Thomas Westwood.

How weak is painting to describe a man! Say that he stands four feet and a nail high by his own yard measure, which like the Sceptre of Agamemnon shall never sprout again, still you have no adequate idea, nor when I tell you that his dear hump, which I have favord in the picture, seems to me of the buffalo—indicative and repository of mild qualities, a budget of kindnesses, still you have not the man. . . .

"Henry Crabb is at Rome, advices to that effect have reach'd Bury. But by solemn legacy he bequeath'd at parting (whether he should live or die) a Turkey of Suffolk to be sent every succeeding Xmas to us and divers other friends. What a genuine old Bachelor's action! I fear he will find the air of Italy too classic. His station is in the Hartz forest, his soul is *Bego'ethed*. Miss Kelly we never see; Talfourd not this half-year; the latter flourishes, but the exact number of his children, God forgive me, I have utterly forgotten, we single people are often out in our count there. Shall I say two? One darling I know they have lost within a twelvemonth, but scarce known to me by sight, and that was a second child lost. We see scarce anybody. We have just now Emma with us for her holydays: you remember her playing at brag with Mr. Quillinan at poor Monkhouse's! She is grown an agreeable young woman; she sees what I write, so you may understand me with limitations. She was our inmate for a twelvemonth, grew natural to us,

and then they told us it was best for her to go out as a Governess, and so she went out, and we were only two of us, and our pleasant house-mate is changed to an occasional visitor. If they want my sister to go out (as they call it) there will be only one of us. Heaven keep us all from this acceding to Unity!"

For a while the Westwoods' house seemed to solve the problem, but later, as we shall see, the Lambs became dissatisfied and made yet another and final move. Mrs. Jenkins, the present owner of Westwood Cottage (1920), is delighted to show visitors over the house Since Lamb's day it has been enlarged by the absorption of a stable and loft, and the addition of a bay window; but the Lambs' two sitting-rooms are practically as they were, and the garden retains an apple tree which they must have known. Like their earlier home next door, Westwood Cottage bears a tablet, stating that it was here that Charles Lamb lived from October, 1829, until May, 1833. Standing on the little lawn one can see the very window of the next house through which, it is possible, Lamb projected his presentation copies. The white house opposite Westwood's, in which a sick lady lay for so long (as mentioned in one of the letters), has not been touched since that day The Enfield "Greyhound," however, where the Cowden Clarkes and others of Lamb's friends lodged, is now a bank, but the "Crown and Horseshoe" on Chase Side, whence Lamb sometimes fetched a jug for an unexpected visitor, and where, as we shall see, he once had an uncomfortable adventure, is where it always was, on the bank of the New River; but it has been re-faced.

Two other letters may be quoted before 1829 closes. Talfourd had named a child Charles Lamb Talfourd, and had apprised Lamb of the circumstance. The name-father replied, "You could not have told me of a more friendly thing than you have been doing. I am proud of my namesake. I shall take care never to do any dirty action, pick pockets, or anyhow get myself

hanged, for fear of reflecting ignominy upon your young Chrisom. I have now a motive to be good. I shall not *omnis moriar*;—my name borne down the black gulf of oblivion. I shall survive in eleven letters, five more than Cæsar. Possibly I shall come to be knighted, or more! Sir C. L. Talfourd, Bart.! Yet hath it an authorish twang with it, which will wear out my name for poetry. Give him a smile from me till I see him." The little boy, however, lived only to be six years old. On the other hand, Charles Lamb Kenney, a son of James Kenney, who was born in 1821, lived to be sixty.

Writing to Barton on December 8th Lamb was moved, half, I imagine, in earnest, and half in fun, to this outburst: "I will tell you honestly B. B. that it has been long my deliberate judgment, that all Bankrupts, of what denomination civil or religious whatever, ought to be hang'd. The pity of mankind has for ages run in a wrong channel, and has been diverted from poor Creditors (how many I have known sufferers! Hazlitt has just been defrauded of £100 by his Bookseller-friend's breaking [1]) to scoundrel Debtors. I know all the topics, that distress may come upon an honest man without his fault, that the failure of one that he trusted was his calamity &c. &c. Then let *both* be hang'd. O how careful it would make traders! These are my deliberate thoughts after many years' experience in matters of trade. What a world of trouble it would save you, if Friend * * * * * had been immediately hangd, without benefit of clergy, which (being a Quaker I presume) he could not reasonably insist upon. Why, after slaving twelve months in your assign-business, you will be enabled to declare seven pence in the Pound in all human probability. B. B., he should be *hanged*. Trade will never reflourish in this land till such a Law is establish'd."

[1] Hunt & Clarke, the publishers of his *Life of Napoleon*.

In this year an edition of Lamb's poems, bound up with those of Rogers, Campbell, James Montgomery and Kirke White, was published by A. & W. Galignani in Paris. It consisted of the poems in the *Works*, with seven additional pieces collected from the magazines. I do not know who was responsible for this edition, which was preceded by a very friendly introduction—possibly Patmore.

In this year also Lamb departed so far from his ordinary apathetic state regarding Affairs as, I think, to assist his neighbour Sergeant Wilde (afterwards Lord Truro) in his election campaign at Newark. Two at least of the squibs in which Wilde's opponent was ridiculed seem to have traces of Lamb's hand in them. His participation in so alien a fray was due to Martin Burney, who acted as Wilde's assistant. In spite of such a powerful political ally the Sergeant was defeated.

CHAPTER XLVIII

1830-1831

London Calling—Emma Isola's Illness—Visit to Fornham—Genial Excesses and Genial Excuses—A Plea for Hone—*Album Verses* published—Jerdan's Attack—Southey's Rally—Other Hostile Critics—A London Experiment—" Free Thoughts on Some Eminent Composers "—The Death of Hazlitt—Mary Lamb Ill Again—George Dyer's Blindness—Wordsworth's Sugar—Coleridge's Pension—*The Englishman's Magazine*—Lamb and Unitarianism—Robinson at Enfield—Thomas Carlyle at Enfield—Truth for Truth's Sake—Lamb and Scotchmen.

IN 1830 two or three events occurred to take Lamb a little out of himself—the illness of Miss Isola in the spring, the publication of *Album Verses* and a sojourn in London in the summer, and the death of Hazlitt in September.

In the long letter to Wordsworth of January 22nd, the first of the year, Lamb says, " Under his [Westwood's] roof now ought I to take my rest, but that back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner. Well, if we ever do move, we have encumbrances the less to impede us : all our furniture has faded under the auctioneer's hammer, going for nothing like the tarnishd frippery of the prodigal, and we have only a spoon or two left to bless us. Clothed we came into Enfield, and naked we must go out of it. I would live in London shirtless, bookless." In Mary Lamb's postscript to the same letter, addressed to Dorothy Wordsworth, we read, " I never go to town, nor my brother, but at his quarterly visits at the India House, and when he does, he finds it melancholy, so many of our old friends being dead or dispersed, and the very streets, he says altering every day. . . . If

you knew how happy your letters made us you would write I know more frequently. Pray think of this. How chearfully should we pay the postage *any week*."

Writing to Barton on February 25th Lamb repeats his old complaint of the inanity of country life. "Let me congratulate you on the Spring coming in, and do you in return condole with me for the Winter going out. When the old one goes, seldom comes a better I dread the prospect of Summer, with his all day-long days. No need of his assistance to make country places dull. With fire and candle light, I can dream myself in Holborn. With lightsome skies shining in to bed time, I can not. This Meseck, and these tents of Kedar—I would dwell in the skirts of Jericho rather, and think every blast of the coming in Mail a Ram's Horn. Give me old London at Fire and Plague times, rather than these tepid gales, healthy country air, and purposeless exercise."

It is in this letter that he makes the remark which his biographers have to keep continually in the background of the mind, "The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected."

On the same or the next day came news from Fornham of the illness of Miss Isola—an attack of brain fever—very distressing to Lamb. On March 1st he replies to a letter containing better news, "You would forgive me for my nonsense if you knew how light-hearted you have made two poor souls at Enfield, that were gasping for news of their poor friend. . . . We are happier than we hardly know how to bear." Writing again to Mrs. Williams on March 22nd, he announces his intention of travelling to Fornham on the following Monday to bring Miss Isola home. The visit was made, and on April 2nd he tells Mrs. Williams of their safe arrival at home, in one of the best of his later letters. "I have great pleasure in letting you know that Miss Isola has suffered very little from fatigue on

her long journey. I am ashamed to say that I came home rather the more tired of the two. But I am a very unpractised traveller. . . . We found my Sister very well in health, only a little impatient to see her; and, after a few hysterical tears for gladness, all was comfortable again. We arrived here from Epping between five and six.

"The incidents of our journey were trifling, but you bade me tell them. We had then in the coach a rather talkative Gentleman, but very civil, all the way, and took up a servant maid at Stamford, going to a sick mistress. . . . The *former* engaged me in a discourse for full twenty miles on the probable advantages of Steam Carriages, which being merely problematical, I bore my part in with some credit, in spite of my totally un-engineer-like faculties. But when somewhere about Stanstead he put an unfortunate question to me as to the 'probability of its turning out a good turnip season'; and when I, who am still less of an agriculturist than a steam-philosopher, not knowing a turnip from a potato ground, innocently made answer that I believed it depended very much upon boiled legs of mutton, my unlucky reply set Miss Isola a laughing to a degree that disturbed her tranquility for the only moment in our journey. I am afraid my credit sank very low with my other fellow-traveller, who had thought he had met with a *well-informed passenger*, which is an accident so desirable in a Stage Coach. We were rather less communicative, but *still* friendly, the rest of the way."

Some acrostics enclosed in this letter produced a reply acrostic, presumably on Lamb's name, from Mrs. Williams. In acknowledging it Lamb writes very happily: "I do assure you that your verses gratified me very much, and my sister is quite *proud* of them. For the first time in my life I congratulated myself upon the shortness and meanness of my name. Had it been Schwartzenberg or Esterhazy, it would have

put you to some puzzle. I am afraid I shall sicken you of acrostics; but this last was written *to order*. I beg you to have inserted in your county paper something like this advertisement. 'To the nobility, gentry, and others, about Bury.—C. Lamb respectfully informs his friends and the public in general, that he is leaving off business in the acrostic line, as he is going into an entirely new line. Rebuses and charades done as usual, and upon the old terms. Also, Epitaphs to suit the memory of any person deceased.'" The letter has this pleasant postscript in the old manner: "*P.S.*—I am the worst folder-up of a letter in the world, except certain Hottentots, in the land of Caffre, who never fold up their letters at all, writing very badly upon skins, &c."

To the same period probably belongs a very characteristic little note to the Enfield doctor concerning some medicine addressed by mistake to Miss Isola Lamb: "No such person is known on the Chase Side, and she is fearful of taking medicines which may have been made up for another patient. She begs me to say that she was born an *Isola* and christened *Emma*. Moreover that she is Italian by birth, and that her ancestors were from Isola Bella (Fair Island) in the kingdom of Naples. She has never changed her name and rather mournfully adds that she has no prospect at present of doing so. She is literally I. SOLA, or single, at present. Therefore she begs that the obnoxious monosyllable may be omitted on future Phials,—an innocent syllable enough, you'll say, but she has no claim to it. It is the bitterest pill of the seven you have sent her. When a lady loses her good *name*, what is to become of her? Well she must swallow it as well as she can, but begs the dose may not be repeated."

To the same doctor—Jacob Vale Asbury [1]—was written one of Lamb's most amusing letters of penitence

[1] Lamb thought his name James, as an extant acrostic proves.

for a last night's indiscretion, belonging probably to the present year. It begins: "It is an observation of a wise man that 'moderation is best in all things.' I cannot agree with him 'in liquor.' There is a smoothness and oiliness in wine that makes it go down by a natural channel, which I am positive was made for that descending. Else, why does not wine choke us? could Nature have made that sloping lane, not to facilitate the down-going? She does nothing in vain. You know that better than I. You know how often she has helped you at a dead lift, and how much better entitled she is to a fee than yourself sometimes, when you carry off the credit. Still there is something due to manners and customs, and I should apologise to you and Mrs. Asbury for being absolutely carried home upon a man's shoulders thro' Silver Street, up Parson's Lane, by the Chapels (which might have taught me better), and then to be deposited like a dead log at Gaffar Westwood's, who it seems does not 'insure' against intoxication. Not that the mode of conveyance is objectionable. On the contrary, it is more easy than a one-horse chaise. Ariel in the 'Tempest' says

> On a Bat's back do I fly, after sunset merrily.

Now I take it that Ariel must sometimes have stayed out late of nights. Indeed, he pretends that 'where the bee sucks, there lurks he,' as much as to say that his suction is as innocent as that little innocent (but damnably stinging when he is provok'd) winged creature. But I take it, that Ariel was fond of metheglin, of which the Bees are notorious Brewers."

One other letter in a similar vein, provoked by a similar lapse, has been preserved; it is to Cary, and though it belongs to a somewhat later date it is more fitting to allude to it here. Lamb, on one of his monthly visits to Cary at the British Museum, in 1834, had been a little overcome. "I protest I know not

in what words to invest my sense of the shameful violation of hospitality, which I was guilty of on that fatal Wednesday. Let it be blotted from the calendar. Had it been committed at a layman's house, say a merchant's or manufacturer's, a cheesemonger's or greengrocer's, or, to go higher, a barrister's, a member of Parliament's, a rich banker's, I should have felt alleviation, a drop of self-pity. But to be seen deliberately to go out of the house of a clergyman drunk! a clergyman of the Church of England too! not that alone, but of an expounder of that dark Italian Hierophant, an exposition little short of *his* who dared unfold the Apocalypse: divine riddles both and (without supernal grace vouchsafed) Arks not to be fingered without present blasting to the touchers. And, then, from what house! Not a common glebe or vicarage (which yet had been shameful), but from a kingly repository of sciences, human and divine, with the primate of England for its guardian, arrayed in public majesty, from which the profane vulgar are bid fly. Could all those volumes have taught me nothing better!"

A glimpse of Lamb in his cups is given by Mrs. Procter in a letter to Mrs. Jameson in 1830 or thereabouts. "Charles Lamb," she writes (from 25 Bedford Square), "dined here on Monday at 5, and by seven he was so tipsy he could not stand. Martin Burney carried him from one room to the other like a sack of coals, he insisting on saying 'Diddle diddle dumpty, my son John'—he slept until 10, and then awoke more tipsy than before—and, between his fits of bantering Martin Burney, kept saying, 'Please God I'll never enter this cursed house again.' He wrote a note next day begging pardon and asking when he may come again. Poor Miss Lamb is ill."

The late Dykes Campbell sent Mrs. Procter, fifty-six years later, a copy of this letter, when the original was sold by auction, and drew from Barry Cornwall's

widow a characteristic reply, in which she remarked: "I could not help laughing when I read your extract. I have entirely forgotten the dinner. If people will dine at 5 what can be expected? We have no time to get tipsy now, and that is our excuse."

A letter to Ayrton on March 14th revives old times at the Burneys: "the old Captain's significant nod over the right shoulder (was it not?); Mrs. Burney's determined questioning of the score, after the game was absolutely gone to the devil, the plain but hospitable cold boiled-beef suppers at sideboard; all which fancies, redolent of middle age and strengthful spirits, come across us ever and anon in this vale of deliberate senectitude, ycleped Enfield." The main purpose of the letter was to reply to an offer of John Murray to bring out a revised edition of Lamb's *Dramatic Specimens*. Lamb suggested adding the Garrick extracts from the *Table Book*; but the project, as far as Murray was concerned, fell through, and the book was published in 1835 by Moxon.

In May we find Lamb busy in the interest of William Hone whom, as we have seen, he and some friends had installed in a coffee-house in Gracechurch Street some months before, but who was now again in need of financial help. Southey's influence had been gained by Lamb to pave the way for the opening of a subscription in the *Times*, and on May 21st the following advertisement was inserted:—

The Family of William Hone, in the course of the last winter, were kindly assisted by private friends to take and alter the premises they now reside in, No. 13, Gracechurch-street, for the purpose of a coffeehouse, to be managed by Mrs. Hone and her elder daughters, but they are in a painful exigency which increases hourly, and renders a public appeal indispensable. The wellwishers to Mr. Hone throughout the kingdom, especially the gratified readers of his literary productions (in all of which he has long ceased to have an interest, and from none of which can he derive advantage), are earnestly solicited to afford the means of completing the fittings and opening the house in a manner suited to its proposed respectability. If this aid be yielded without loss of time, it will be of

indescribable benefit, inasmuch as it will put an end to many grievous anxieties and expenses, inseparable from the lengthened delay which has hitherto been inevitable, and will enable the family to immediately commence the business, which alone they look forward to for support. Subscriptions will be received by the following bankers, &c.

The first subscription list, published on Monday, May 31st, totalled £103. It was headed by £10 from Charles Lamb, Esq., Enfield. On June 10th a further appeal was made. Hone, however, did not prosper, as insufficient capital was raised to be of real service.

In the spring of 1830 Moxon, financed by Samuel Rogers, established himself as a publisher at 64 New Bond Street, and in July he issued his first book : *Album Verses and Other Poems* by Charles Lamb. The little volume had the following dedication :—

TO THE PUBLISHER

Dear Moxon,

I do not know to whom a Dedication of these Trifles is more properly due than to yourself. You suggested the printing of them. You were desirous of exhibiting a specimen of the *manner* in which Publications, entrusted to your future care, would appear. With more propriety, perhaps, the "Christmas," [1] or some other of your own simple, unpretending Compositions, might have served this purpose. But I forget—you have bid a long adieu to the Muses. I had on my hands sundry Copies of Verses written for *Albums*—

Those books kept by modern young Ladies for show,
Of which their plain grandmothers nothing did know—

or otherwise floating about in Periodicals ; which you have chosen in this manner to embody. I feel little interest in their publication. They are simply—*Advertisement Verses.*

It is not for me, nor you, to allude in public to the kindness of our honoured Friend, under whose auspices you are become a Bookseller. May that fine-minded Veteran in Verse enjoy life long enough to see his patronage justified ! I venture to predict that your

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[1] The reference to "Christmas" is to Moxon's poem of that name, published in 1829, and dedicated to Lamb.—The couplet concerning Albums is from one of Lamb's own pieces.—The Veteran in Verse was Samuel Rogers, who, then sixty-seven, lived yet another twenty-five years. Moxon published the superb edition of his *Italy* and his *Poems*, illustrated by Turner and Stothard.

habits of industry, and your cheerful spirit, will carry you through the world.

I am, Dear Moxon,
Your Friend and Sincere Well-wisher,
CHARLES LAMB.

ENFIELD, 1st *June*, 1830.

With the exception of the lines "On an Infant Dying as Soon as it was Born" [1] and the sonnet "Work," [2] there is nothing in *Album Verses* of Lamb's highest or most characteristic quality, but it is a very agreeable collection of light poetry. Its author's motives in issuing the volume were, however, cruelly misunderstood by one paper at least, the *Literary Gazette*, edited by William Jerdan. In the number for July 10th, 1830, was printed a contemptuous review containing this passage: "If any thing could prevent our laughing at the present collection of absurdities, it would be a lamentable conviction of the blinding and engrossing nature of vanity. We could forgive the folly of the original composition, but cannot but marvel at the egotism which has preserved, and the conceit which has published." Lamb himself probably was not much disturbed by Jerdan's venom, but Southey took it much to heart, and sent to the *Times* of August 6th, 1830, the following lines in praise of his friend :—

TO CHARLES LAMB

On the Reviewal of his *Album Verses* in the *Literary Gazette*

Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,
Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
To us who have admired and loved thee long,
It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
To hear thy good report, now borne along
Upon the honest breath of public praise:
We know that with the elder sons of song,
In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
Thy name shall keep its course to after days.

[1] See Chap. XLV. [2] See Chap. XXXIX.

The empty pertness, and the vulgar wrong,
The flippant folly, the malicious will,
Which have assailed thee, now, or heretofore,
Find, soon or late, their proper meed of shame;
The more thy triumph, and our pride the more,
When witling critics to the world proclaim,
In lead, their own dolt incapacity.
Matter it is of mirthful memory
To think, when thou wert early in the field,
How doughtily small Jeffrey ran at thee
A-tilt, and broke a bulrush on thy shield.
And now, a veteran in the lists of fame,
I ween, old Friend! thou art not worse bested
When with a maudlin eye and drunken aim
Dulness hath thrown *a jerdan* at thy head.

SOUTHEY.

This was Southey's first public utterance concerning Lamb since the famous open letter to him of October, 1823. Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton in the same month: "How noble . . . in R. S. to come forward for an old friend who had treated him so unworthily." For the critics, he added, he did not care the "five hundred thousandth part of the tythe of a half-farthing."

Leigh Hunt also threw himself into the fray, for Lamb, against the *Literary Gazette*, and the columns of the *Examiner* contained a number of "Rejected Epigrams" (one at least of which was from Lamb's pen), in which Jerdan was attacked, for the most part with little wit, and a total absence of delicacy. The following lines are probably Lamb's:—

On English ground I calculated once
How many block-heads—taking dunce by dunce—
There are *four hundred* (if I don't forget)—
The Readers of the *Literary Gazette*.

And these are probably Hunt's:—

INQUEST EXTRAORDINARY

Last week a porter died beneath his burden.
Verdict: Found carrying a *Gazette* from Jerdan.

Jerdan awaited his revenge, and took it when a little volume entitled *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* came his

way for review. The circumstance that Moxon was Tennyson's publisher, as well as Lamb's, not improbably had something to do with the gusto with which the lashes were laid on. Thus :—

Mr. Alfred Tennyson may be considered a pupil of a poetical school, to offer a fair and candid opinion of the merits and demerits of any one of whom, from the Dux of the highest to the Dunce of the lowest form, is sure to bring the whole about your ears, buzzing, hollooing, yelping, abusing, and pelting, with all the fury of an incensed urchinry. We had a taste of this about a year and a half ago (July 30th, 1830), when we humbly ventured to question the infinite beauty and excellence of Album Verses by C. Lamb (*L. G.*, No. 703). This collection of pretty slipslop, which could not have obtained partial applause at a tea-party, we said was unworthy of publication for general reading; and we regretted that vanity and egotism should have led the amiable writer into the weakness of suffering it to go forth to the world. This offence provoked the unmitigated rage of the school referred to, which, for want of a fitter name, we shall call the Baa-Lamb School; and they hastened to pour out all their impotence upon us.

Blame and praise are thereafter mixed, the sum of the matter being that "Low diet and sound advice may restore the patient [Tennyson]; in the meantime we must commit him to what his publication does not deserve to have—a cell." When, however, the *Last Essays of Elia* came out in 1833 the *Literary Gazette* (not without consciousness of its magnanimity) had nothing but good to say of the book.

Jerdan's paper was not alone in its angry reception of *Album Verses*. An even more malignant article was printed in the *Monthly Review*. The writer begins thus :—

Some few years ago, there was in this metropolis a little coterie of half-bred men, who took up poetry and literature as a trade, and who, having access to one or two Sunday newspapers, and now and then to the magazines and reviews, puffed off each other as the first writers of the day. The public, who are always easily deluded by bold pretenders, took no trouble to inquire into the real merits of these much praised individuals; they read on every thing that was offered, whether in verse or prose, and, for aught that we know, joined in the chorus of eulogy that was poured upon the authors from the land of Cockaigne. Among these was Leigh

Hunt, Mr. Procter, better known under the namby-pamby title of Barry Cornwall, Mr. Hazlitt, some half a dozen others whose names we forget, and Mr. Charles Lamb, the inditer of the precious verses now before us. . . .

It is pleasant to reflect, that we have assisted, by our labours and opinions, to accelerate the extinction of all this gossamer tribe of literati, or at least that we have lived to witness their disappearance, one by one, from the temple into which they intruded. Their buzz is silenced. Their painted wings have lost all their pretty colour. Even their slender skeletons are gone, utterly perished. But, unhappily, as the maid whose duty it is to banish from our mansions every mischief-working insect, being about to sit down with a light heart and a merry song on her lip, imagining her work to be finished, happens sometimes to be startled from her quietude by the sudden revival of a moth or a spider, whose death she hoped she had sufficiently compassed, so do we feel surprised at the reappearance of Charles Lamb! Poor fellow, he looks more like a ghost than any thing human or divine. His verses partake of the same character. They exhibit the fleeting, shadowy reflections of thoughts that, in their best days, were blessed with a very slender portion of substance.

I have no guess as to the writer of this indictment; but the close of the passage just quoted suggests that he knew something of Lamb and his career. A further idea of his incapacity to understand his author is offered by the remark, in a furious onslaught on the rhymed letter to Bernard Barton: "But here everything is bad. The taste of presenting a coloured print to a Quaker is atrocious in the first place." The absence of any reference to *Elia* denotes either incompetence or meanness.

The real object of these attacks was, I fancy, less Lamb than Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. Hazlitt, of course, was disliked, while Leigh Hunt, with all his gaiety and kindliness, had many enemies, who were not averse from wounding him through his friends, or his friends through him. It must, however, be remembered that although Lamb had always suffered a little through his friendships—the *Anti-Jacobin* whipping him on Coleridge and Lloyd's back, the *Quarterly* on Hazlitt's, *Blackwood* on "Cockney" Hunt's—yet he had probably in conversation said many caustic things about many

of the London reviewers, which, having been repeated, had not been forgotten. Reviewers have never been more than human.

For what reason we do not know—possibly the summer days had become too long and trying—the Lambs determined in July upon a bold step. They left Enfield and took lodgings at 34 (or 24) Southampton Buildings, a house kept by the Misses Buffam. How long Lamb remained I cannot exactly discover—possibly till early in November—but while there he was in poor health and his sister became once again seriously ill. We have a glimpse of him in a letter from Mrs. Aders to Crabb Robinson on September 5th: "Lamb dined with us last Monday. We talked much of you, and the affection he expressed for you did our hearts good. . . . He has been writing a little book of Album verses, the book bearing that title, in which is introduced the exquisitely beautiful poem written on the drawing in my Album ['Angel Help']. He published the new book to make known a young man of the name of Moxon, who has been established in business as a bookseller and publisher by Rogers. . . . Lamb sent us a copy of his, which the reviewers have cut up most unmercifully, and in return Lamb has cut up them and Southey has written a beautiful sonnet [?] in praise of the book and satirising the reviewers."

The best letter of 1830, after that to Wordsworth from which I have quoted above, is to Sarah Hazlitt on May 24th, which relates again the story of the turnip crop and boiled legs of mutton; and contains the description of Martin Burney quoted in Chapter XX, and the following passage: "Ayrton was here yesterday, and as *learned* to the full as my fellow-traveller. What a pity that he will spoil a wit and a devilish pleasant fellow (as he is) by wisdom! He talk'd on Music; and by having read Hawkins and Burney recently I was enabled to talk of Names, and

show more knowledge than he had suspected I possessed; and in the end he begg'd me to shape my thoughts upon paper, which I did after he was gone, and sent him.

"FREE THOUGHTS ON SOME EMINENT COMPOSERS

Some cry up Haydn, some Mozart,
Just as the whim bites. For my part,
I do not care a farthing candle
For either of them, or for Handel.
Cannot a man live free and easy,
Without admiring Pergolesi!
Or thro' the world with comfort go
That never heard of Doctor Blow!
So help me God, I hardly have;
And yet I eat, and drink, and shave,
Like other people, (if you watch it),
And know no more of stave and crotchet
Than did the un-Spaniardised Peruvians;
Or those old ante-queer-Diluvians
That lived in the unwash'd world with Jubal,
Before that dirty Blacksmith Tubal,
By stroke on anvil, or by summ'at,
Found out, to his great surprise, the gamut.
I care no more for Cimerosa
That he did for Salvator Rosa,
Being no Painter; and bad luck
Be mine, if I can bear that Gluck!
Old Tycho Brahe and modern Herschel
Had something in them; but who's Purcel?
The devil, with his foot so cloven,
For aught I care, may take Beethoven;
And, if the bargain does not suit,
I'll throw him Weber in to boot!
There's not the splitting of a splinter
To chuse 'twixt *him last named*, and Winter.
Of Doctor Pepusch old queen Dido
Knew just as much, God knows, as I do.
I would not go four miles to visit
Sebastian Bach—or Batch—which is it?
No more I would for Bononcini.
As for Novello and Rossini,
I shall not say a word about [to grieve] 'em,
Because they're living. So I leave 'em."

Lamb's story of the origin of these verses is not necessarily correct. I fancy that he had written them

for Novello before he produced them in reply to Ayrton's challenge. When sending the poem to Ayrton in a letter at this time, he said that it was written to gratify Novello. Mary Lamb (or possibly Charles Lamb, personating her) appended the following postscript to the verses in Novello's album :—

> The reason why my brother's so severe,
> Vincentio, is—my brother has no *ear*:
> And Caradori her mellifluous throat
> Might stretch in vain to make him learn a note.
> Of common tunes he knows not anything,
> Nor "Rule, Britannia" from "God save the King."
> He rail at Handel! He the gamut quiz!
> I'd lay my life he knows not what it is.
> His spite at music is a pretty whim—
> He loves not it, because it loves not him.

It was during the Lambs' sojourn in London—on September 18th—that another blow came to them with the death of William Hazlitt.

There is no record of Hazlitt having visited Enfield ; or indeed, since his return from the Continent in October, 1825, of having resumed any of his old intimacy with the Lambs. But Lamb lived so much in the past that Hazlitt's death must have seemed like the breaking of a present friendship. Since his return (without the second Mrs. Hazlitt, who left him finally in Switzerland), he had been busy on his *Life of Napoleon*, his *Conversations with Northcote*, and work for the periodicals. During this time he had moved about between London and Winterslow Hut, living in London in Down Street, in Half Moon Street, in Bouverie Street and finally at 6 Frith Street, Soho, and it was at the last lodging that he was taken ill and died. He was fifty-five years of age. "Well, I've had a happy life," were his last words.

Lamb, White (Edward White of the East India House), Hessey, the publisher, and William Hazlitt the younger were at his bedside. Lamb, says Talfourd, "joined a few friends in attending his funeral in the

churchyard of St. Anne's, Soho, where he was interred, and felt his loss—not so violently at the time, as mournfully in the frequent recurrence of the sense that a chief source of intellectual pleasure was stopped."

On October 9th Lamb again made his will, leaving everything to Talfourd and Ryle of the East India House in trust for his sister for her life, the reversion to go to Emma Isola. This means that the previous will, possibly never completed, in which Allsop, Talfourd and Procter were executors, was destroyed.

A letter to Moxon on November 12th describes the end of the London experiment: "I have brought my sister to Enfield, being sure that she had no hope of recovery in London. Her state of mind is deplorable beyond any example I almost fear whether she has strength at her time of life ever to get out of it. Here she must be nursed, and neither see nor hear of anything in the world out of her sick chamber. The mere hearing that Southey had called at our lodgings totally upset her. Pray see him, or hear of him at Mr. Rickman's, and excuse my not writing to him. I dare not write or receive a letter in her presence; every little task so agitates her."

Lamb, however, seems to have settled down again to work—probably stimulated by his re-entry into the literary arena with the *Album Verses*—and during his sister's illness he composed the comic ballad *Satan in Search of a Wife*, issued anonymously by Moxon in 1831. In an undated letter to Moxon, which belongs I think to the end of the year, Lamb says that Mary Lamb is again well and Emma Isola with them.

There are few letters belonging to 1831, and since Robinson was still abroad our knowledge of the Lambs is small; but we may suppose that life was a little easier with them. The return of Lamb to essay-writing, to assist Moxon's *Englishman's Magazine*, was very good for him while it lasted; but the duration of the work was all too brief.

On February 22nd we have our last glimpse of George Dyer, now an old man very near total blindness. From Lamb's letter to him of that date I have quoted passages in Chapters V and XIV; he says also, in his best vein of half-humorous kindliness, "You are many films removed yet from Milton's calamity. You write perfectly intelligibly. Marry, the letters are not all of the same size or tallness; but that only shows your proficiency in the *hands*—text, german-hand, court-hand, sometimes law-hand, and affords variety. You pen better than you did a twelvemonth ago; and if you continue to improve, you bid fair to win the golden pen which is the prize at your young gentleman's academy. But you must beware of Valpy, and his printing-house, that hazy cave of Trophonius, out of which it was a mercy that you escaped with a glimmer. Beware of MSS. and Variæ Lectiones. Settle the text for once in your mind, and stick to it. You have some years' good sight in you yet, if you do not tamper with it. It is not for you (for *us* I should say) to go poring into Greek contractions, and star-gazing upon slim Hebrew points. We have yet the sight

> Of sun, and moon, and star, throughout the year,
> And man and woman.

You have vision enough to discern Mrs. Dyer from the other comely gentlewoman who lives up at staircase No. 5; or, if you should make a blunder in the twilight, Mrs. Dyer has too much good sense to be jealous for a mere effect of imperfect optics. But don't try to write the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, in the compass of a halfpenny; nor run after a midge or a mote to catch it; and leave off hunting for needles in bushels of hay, for all these things strain the eyes. The snow is six feet deep in some parts here. I must put on jack-boots to get at the post-office with this. It is not good for weak eyes to pore upon snow too much. It lies in drifts. I wonder

what its drift is; only that it makes good pancakes, remind Mrs. Dyer. It turns a pretty green world into a white one. It glares too much for an innocent colour, methinks. I wonder why you think I dislike gilt edges. They set off a letter marvellously. Yours, for instance, looks for all the world like a tablet of curious *hieroglyphics* in a gold frame. But don't go and lay this to your eyes. You always wrote hieroglyphically, yet not to come up to the mystical notations and conjuring characters of Dr. Parr."

On April 13th Lamb tells Cary that he is daily expecting Wordsworth, and a message from Mary Lamb indicates that she is well. On the poet's visit, when it was made (and of the Westwoods), we have a sidelight in Patmore's recollections of Lamb. The Lambs, he says, paid their landlord and landlady "a price almost sufficient to keep all the household twice over, but where, nevertheless, they were expected to pay for every extra cup of tea, or any other refreshment, they might offer to any occasional visitor. Lamb soon found out the mistake he had made in connecting himself with these people, and did not fail to philosophise (to his friends) on their blind stupidity, in thus risking what was almost their sole means of support, in order to screw an extra shilling out of his easy temper. But he endured it patiently nevertheless. One circumstance I remember his telling me with great glee, which was evidently unmixed with any anger or annoyance at the cupidity of these people, but only at its blindness. Wordsworth and another friend had just been down to see them, and had taken tea; and in the next week's bill *one* of the extra 'teas' was charged an extra sixpence, and on Lamb's inquiring what this meant, the reply was, that 'the elderly gentleman,' meaning Wordsworth, 'had taken such a quantity of sugar in his tea.'"

After April 13th there are two comic letters in Latin, to Barton and Cary, and on July 14th a very interest-

ing communication to Moxon concerning Coleridge, on whose behalf Lamb was exerting himself. "About 8 days before you told me of R.'s [Rogers'] interview with the Premier, I, at the desire of Badams, wrote a letter to him (Badams) [1] in the most moving terms setting forth the age, infirmities &c. of Coleridge. This letter was convey'd to [by] B. to his friend Mr. Ellice of the Treasury, Brother in Law to Lord Grey, who immediately pass'd it on [to] Lord Grey, who assured him of immediate relief by a grant on the King's Bounty, which news E. communicated to B. with a desire to confer with me on the subject, on which I went up to THE Treasury (yesterday fortnight) and was received by the Great Man with the utmost cordiality, (shook hands with me coming and going), a fine hearty Gentleman, and, as seeming willing to relieve any anxiety from me, promised me an answer thro' Badams in 2 or 3 days at furthest. Meantime Gilman's extraordinary insolent letter comes out in the Times! As to *my* acquiescing in this strange step, I told Mr. Ellice (who expressly said that the thing was renewable three-yearly) that I consider'd such a grant as almost equivalent to the lost pension, as from C.'s appearance and the representations of the Gilmans, I scarce could think C.'s life worth 2 years' purchase. I did not know that the Chancellor had been previously applied to. Well, after seeing Ellice I wrote in the most urgent manner to the Gillmans, insisting on an immediate letter of acknowledgment from Coleridge, or them *in his name* to Badams, who not knowing C. had come forward so disinterestedly amidst his complicated illnesses and embarrassments, to *use up* an interest, which he may so well need, in favor of a stranger; and from that day not a letter has B. or even myself, received from Highgate, unless *that publish'd one in the Times is meant as a general answer*

[1] Carlyle's friend, the chemist, who married Louisa Holcroft, daughter of Thomas Holcroft and stepdaughter of Kenney.

to all the friends who have stirr'd to do C. service! Poor C. is not to blame, for he is in leading strings. I particularly wish you would read this part of my note to Mr. Rogers."

The explanation of the foregoing portion of the letter is best given in the words of Coleridge's closest student. "On June 3, 1830," writes Dykes Campbell in his memoir of Coleridge, "died George IV, and with him died the pensions of the Royal Associates. Apparently they did not find this out until the following year. In the *Englishman's Magazine* for June, 1831, attention was directed to the fact that 'intimation had been given to Mr. Coleridge and his brother Associates that they must expect their allowances "very shortly" to cease'—the allowances having been a personal bounty of the late King. On June 3, 1831, Gillman wrote a letter to the *Times*, 'in consequence of a paragraph which appeared in the *Times* of this day.' He states that on the sudden suppression of the honorarium, representations on Coleridge's behalf were made to Lord Brougham, with the result that the Treasury (Lord Grey) offered a private grant of £200, which Coleridge 'had felt it his duty most respectfully to decline.' Stuart, however, wrote to King William's son, the Earl of Munster, pointing out the hardship entailed on Coleridge, 'who is old and infirm, and without other means of subsistence.' He begs the Earl to lay the matter before his royal father. To this a reply came, excusing the King on account of his 'very reduced income,' but promising that the matter shall be laid before His Majesty. To these letters, which are printed in *Letters from the Lake Poets*, the following note is appended: 'The annuity . . . was not renewed, but a sum of £300 was ultimately handed over to Coleridge by the Treasury.' Even apart from this bounty, Coleridge was not a sufferer by the withdrawal of the King's pension, for Frere made it up to him annually."

It was only through the publication of Lamb's letter that his share in Coleridge's fortunes was discovered.

Lamb must have been again very busy at this time in preparing his contributions to the *Englishman's Magazine*, which Moxon had acquired in time to be responsible for the August issue. To that number Lamb sent his reminiscences of Elliston. In the September number he had his rather cruel but very diverting account of George Dawe, the painter, from which I have quoted in Chapter XXII, and in October the essay on "Newspapers Thirty-Five Years Ago," from which I have quoted in Chapter XVIII, wherein we see again, after five years of silence, almost the true Elia. Both these papers were part of a series called "Peter's Net," with the motto "All is fish that comes to my net." Lamb also reviewed his own *Album Verses*, in the guise of a eulogy of Vincent Bourne. In a letter to Moxon in August, enclosing the paper on Dawe, Lamb refers to Edward FitzGerald's "Meadows in Spring" (which the *Athenæum*, when reprinting it from Hone's *Year Book*, had thought to be by Lamb himself) as "exquisite poetry," and one of the two pieces—Montgomery's "Common Lot" is the other—the writers of which he envied.

On September 13th, writing to William Hazlitt the younger, promising some verses on Hazlitt to be printed in his *Life* (which however, if written, have vanished) Lamb says that they have a sick house. But as, writing on September 23rd, Mrs. Aders tells Crabb Robinson that the Lambs are now well, we must suppose the illness to have been unimportant. With the October number the *Englishman's Magazine* came to an end, so suddenly that the news found Lamb in the midst of a new article for it, the essay on the "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art." Moxon's capital was, I imagine, too small to permit of further risks.

I quote from Lamb's letter replying to the intima-

tion that the magazine was no more, premising that the "Devil's Money" refers to profits on *Satan in Search of a Wife*. "To address an abdicated monarch is a nice point of breeding. To give him his lost titles is to mock him; to withhold 'em is to wound him. But his Minister who falls with him may be gracefully sympathetic. I do honestly feel for your diminution of honors, and regret even the pleasing cares which are part and parcel of greatness. Your magnanimous submission, and the cheerful tone of your renunciation, in a Letter which, without flattery, would have made an 'ARTICLE,' and which, rarely as I keep letters, shall be preserved, comfort me a little. Will it please, or plague you, to say that when your parcel came I damned it, for my pen was warming in my hand at a ludicrous description of a Landscape of an R.A., which I calculated upon sending you to morrow, the last day you gave me. Now any one calling in, or a letter coming, puts an end to my writing for the day. Little did I think that the mandate had gone out, so destructive to my occupation, so relieving to the apprehensions of the whole body of R.A.'s. So you see I had not quitted the ship while a plank was remaining.

"To drop metaphors, I am sure you have done wisely. The very spirit of your epistle speaks that you have a weight off your mind. I have one on mine. The cash in hand, which, as * * * * * * less truly says, burns in my pocket. I feel queer at returning it (who does not?). You feel awkward at retaking it (who ought not?). Is there no middle way of adjusting this fine embarrassment? I think I have hit upon a medium to skin the sore place over, if not quite to heal it. You hinted that there might be something under £10 by and by accruing to me *Devil's Money*. You are sanguine—say £7 : 10s.—that I entirely renounce and abjure all future interest in, I insist upon it, and 'by Him I will not name' I won't touch a penny of it. That will split your Loss one half—and leave

me conscientious possessor of what I hold. Less than your assent to this, no proposal will I accept of. . . . If I write much more I shall expand into an article, which I cannot afford to let you have so cheap.

" By the by, to shew the perverseness of human will —while I thought I *must* furnish one of those accursed things monthly, it seemed a Labour above Hercules's ' Twelve ' in a year, which were evidently Monthly Contributions. Now I am emancipated, I feel as if I had a thousand Essays swelling within me. False feelings both. . . .

" Your ex-Lampoonist, or Lamb-punnist—from Enfield, Oct. 24, or ' last day but one for receiving articles that can be inserted.' "

In the same letter Lamb says : " Did G. D. send his penny tract to me to convert me to Unitarianism ? Dear blundering soul ! why I am as old a one-Goddite as himself." That Lamb as a young man was a convinced Unitarian we have seen ; but when he contributed to the *London Magazine*, in 1825, a serious remonstrance with Unitarians for their weakness and inconsistency in allowing themselves to make use of the Established churches for marriage ceremonies and salving their consciences with a " protest," he wrote as an independent critic of all sects. We cannot suppose him to have been for the second half of his life anything more than a well-wishing sympathiser with Unitarian tenets. Among the stories told of him is one of a sudden outburst against the Unitarians for robbing him of " two-thirds of his God." Coleridge had become positively hostile to the sect. Emerson describes a visit to Highgate in 1833 during which the old mystic did little but fulminate to his American guest against Unitarianism.

On October 16th—to go back a few days—Crabb Robinson, now in England again after a long sojourn in Rome and elsewhere, gives an account of a visit to Enfield :—

"October 16th, 1831 :—Breakfasted at home, and late, so that it was between one and two when I reached Lamb, having rode on the stage to Edmonton, and walked thence to Enfield. I found Lamb and his sister boarding with the Westwoods—good people, who, I dare say, take care of them. At least the women, for W. is an old man and invalid and seems nearly in his dotage. Mrs. W. seems active and kind. Lamb has rendered himself their benefactor by getting a place for their son in Aders' counting-house. They return his services by attentions which he and his sister want, but it is deplorable that he should be reduced to such a state that he has none to associate with but the very lowest of people in attainments. No wonder that he seems very discontented. Both he and Miss L. looked somewhat older, but not more than all do almost whom I have closely noticed since my return. They were heartily glad to see me as it seemed. After dinner, I was anxious to leave them before it was dark, and the Lambs accompanied me between 4 and 5 o'clock, but they walked only a short time with me."

On November 2nd of this year Lamb received the famous visit from Thomas Carlyle that resulted in an entry in the philosopher's *Diary* which were it not so instructive every one would wish blotted. Carlyle was within a month of his thirty-sixth birthday, Lamb was nearly fifty-seven. Carlyle was at the beginning of a career of impatience and omniscience, Lamb near the end of a life of uncomplaining unselfishness. The young Scotchman, master of himself, servant of Truth for Truth's sake, with eyes alert for insincerity, weakness, frivolity and other deadly sins, wasted the afternoon of November 2nd by travelling to Enfield and back. His *Diary* received the record of the fruitless journey, set down with a pitying self-satisfied pen :—

"November 2 :—How few people speak for Truth's sake, even in its humblest modes! I return from

Enfield, where I have seen Lamb, &c. &c. Not one of that class will tell you a straightforward story or even a credible one about any matter under the sun. All must be packed up into epigrammatic contrasts, startling exaggerations, claptraps that will get a plaudit from the galleries! I have heard a hundred anecdotes about William Hazlitt for example; yet cannot by never so much cross-questioning even form to myself the smallest notion of how it really stood with him. Wearisome, inexpressibly wearisome to me is that sort of clatter; it is not walking (to the end of time you would never advance, for these persons indeed have no WHITHER); it is not bounding and frisking in graceful, natural joy; it is dancing——a St. Vitus's dance. Heigh ho!

"Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane. A more pitiful, ricketty, gasping, staggering, stammering Tomfool I do not know. He is witty by denying truisms and abjuring good manners. His speech wriggles hither and thither with an incessant painful fluctuation, not an opinion in it, or a fact, or a phrase that you can thank him for ——more like a convulsion fit than a natural systole and diastole. Besides, he is now a confirmed, shameless drunkard; *asks* vehemently for gin and water in strangers' houses, tipples till he is utterly mad, and is only not thrown out of doors because he is too much despised for taking such trouble with him. Poor Lamb! Poor England, when such a despicable abortion is named genius! He said 'There are just two things I regret in England's history: first, that Guy Fawkes' plot did not take effect (there would have been so glorious an *explosion*); second, that the Royalists did not hang Milton (then we might have laughed at them), &c. &c.' *Armer Teufel!*"

The history of misunderstanding has few things better than this. I like to think of the poor broken-down Cockney sizing-up his visitor in a twinkling and

deciding to give him exactly what he merited. It is one of our literary tragedies that Lamb's record of the visit is not also preserved, but there is a passage in a Cockney essay called "Imperfect Sympathies" which has some anticipatory bearing upon November 2nd, 1831: "I have been trying all my life to like Scotchmen, and am obliged to desist from the experiment in despair. They cannot like me—and in truth, I never knew one of that nation who attempted to do it. There is something more plain and ingenuous in their mode of proceeding. We know one another at first sight." Lamb then goes on to describe his own imperfect intellect, in the words which I have quoted in Chapter XXXVI.

He continues: "The brain of a true Caledonian (if I am not mistaken) is constituted upon quite a different plan. His Minerva is born in panoply. You are never admitted to see his ideas in their growth—if, indeed, they do grow, and are not rather put together upon principles of clock-work. You never catch his mind in an undress. He never hints or suggests anything, but unlades his stock of ideas in perfect order and completeness. He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him. He never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, to share it with you, before he quite knows whether it be true touch or not. You cannot cry *halves* to anything that he finds. He does not find, but bring. You never witness his first apprehension of a thing. His understanding is always at its meridian—you never see the first dawn, the early streaks.—He has no falterings of self-suspicion."

Such men as Lamb are born to be misunderstood by such men as Carlyle. Carlyle, for all his inspiration and inability to be mistaken, had his imperfect sympathies too. But it is a matter for everlasting regret that his antipathy was so blinding on that November afternoon at Enfield, because otherwise, instead of a

misleading caricature in gall, we might have had one of those faithful etched portraits which none could make so well as he. Yet Carlyle is the ultimate sufferer; it was Carlyle who failed and not Lamb. Carlyle, who never dared to be wrong, had been in the presence of a great man, even a hero (and heroes he made it his special business always to detect and commend), and had failed to recognise him; Lamb, who made no pretensions, had been in the presence of a Scotch irreconcilable and had known it instantly.

Lamb probably suffered much from false estimates; but never was he so gladly and coarsely misunderstood as by his visitor of November 2nd, 1831. Where Carlyle gathered his information as to Lamb's hopeless drunkenness I cannot say: obviously not from personal experience on that afternoon; but every one who is accustomed to hear gossip, literary or otherwise, knows how easily in conversation the occasional vagary of an absentee is exalted into a habit, and a habit into a besetting vice. London was not less thoroughly furnished then than now with tattlers who knew all.[1]

The entry in the *Diary* was not all. In conversation with one who spoke of Lamb's humour, Carlyle denied him the possession of any such gift. "It was only a thin streak of Cockney wit. I have known scores of Scotch moorland farmers, who, for humour, would have

[1] I ought here to quote the following extract from an article on Lamb in the *British Quarterly Review* for May, 1848, the author of which evidently wrote with knowledge; but I do not consider that the story at all justifies Carlyle. Philosophers must be above provocation; they must see below the surface:—"While on this subject, and because, like the former anecdotes, it has not been made public, we may relate the story of his first meeting with Thomas Carlyle. Lamb was never partial to the Scotch, and on this evening he was more than usually offensive in his remarks on their character; but when supper appeared, and a bowl of porridge was placed before Carlyle, Lamb's jokes and remarks upon it were so insulting as almost to lead to an open quarrel. Even Lamb's friend, from whom we had the story, could say nothing in his justification; his behaviour was wantonly offensive."

blown Lamb into the zenith." And more than thirty years later than the entry in the *Diary*, after the publication of both of Talfourd's books, Carlyle returned to the attack, in his *Reminiscences* :—

" Charles Lamb and his Sister came daily, once or oftener [to Badams' house at Enfield] ; a very sorry pair of phenomena. Insuperable proclivity to *gin*, in poor old Lamb. His talk contemptibly small, indicating wondrous ignorance and shallowness, even when it was serious and good-mannered, which it seldom was ; usually *ill*-mannered (to a degree), screwed into frosty artificialities, ghastly make-believe of wit :—in fact more like ' diluted insanity ' (as I defined it) than anything of real jocosity, ' humour,' or geniality. A most slender fibre of actual worth in that poor Charles, abundantly recognisable to me as to others, in his better times and moods ; but he was Cockney to the marrow ; and Cockneydom, shouting, ' Glorious, marvellous, unparalleled in Nature ! ' all his days, had quite bewildered his poor head, and churned nearly all the sense out of the poor man. He was the *leanest* of mankind, tiny black breeches buttoned to the kneecap and no further, surmounting spindle legs also in black, face and head fineish, black, bony, lean, and of a Jew type rather ; in the eyes a kind of *smoky* brightness or confused sharpness ; spoke with a stutter ; in walking tottered and shuffled ; emblem of imbecility bodily and spiritual (something of real *insanity* I have understood), and yet something too of humane, ingenuous, pathetic, sportfully much-enduring."

These words, which break off just as their author seems to have been about to write in a manner more worthy of his genius, were set down shortly before the publication of Procter's memoir of Lamb, in 1866. Let us remember rather Carlyle's letter to Procter after reading that book : " I have been reading your book on Charles Lamb, in the solitary silent regions whither I had fled for a few days of dialogue with

Mother Earth and her elements; I have found in your work something so touching, brave, serene, and pious, that I cannot but write you one brief word of recognition—which I know you will receive with welcome; all the more as I especially *forbid* you to bother yourself with answering it.

"Brevity, perspicuity, graceful clearness; then also perfect veracity, gentleness, lovingness, justness, peaceable candour throughout, a fine kindly sincerity to all comers, with sharp enough insight too, quick recognition graphically rendered—all the qualities, in short, which such a book could have, I find visible in this."

Carlyle, having read Procter's book, might have recanted; but he did not. His praise is all for the biography, not the subject. But Procter's biography of Lamb was valuable because of Lamb, and in its pages is Carlyle convicted. Even more so, I hope,—since there are here more witnesses to Lamb's genius and humanity—is Carlyle convicted in the present work.

CHAPTER XLIX

1832-1833

A Bad Beginning to 1832—Recovery—A Bad Pun—Lamb at Crabb Robinson's—"Christopher North" at Enfield—Walter Savage Landor at Enfield—"Rose Aylmer"—Death of Mrs. Reynolds—*The Reflector*—Mistaken for a Murderer—*The Last Essays of Elia*—Moxon's Sonnets—And Recollections of Lamb—His Engagement to Emma Isola—Enfield Exchanged for Edmonton—The Lambs at Edmonton—Emma Isola's Watch—The Wedding—"Thoughts on Presents of Game"—A Calamity of Authorship.

BETWEEN October, 1831, and April, 1832, there are but two notes. I imagine that Mary Lamb was again ill for a great part of this time, for on January 12th, 1832, Robinson has this sinister entry: "Met Kenney at the Athenæum. He gave me a very melancholy account of Ch. Lamb, which looks like the approach of that catastrophe which every one must fear. His anti-social feeling is quite a disease. I am afraid of going down to him." A little later, however, Lamb was sufficiently himself again to send to the *Athenæum* (the paper) a final tribute to the genius of Munden, who had died on February 6th; and early in March Robinson was able to tell Dorothy Wordsworth that he had heard good accounts of the Lambs from Moxon.

On March 8th he has this entry:—

"I walked to Enfield, and found the Lambs in excellent state,—not in high health, but, what is far better, quiet and cheerful. Miss Isola being there, I could not sleep in the house; but I had a comfortable bed at the inn, and I had a very pleasant evening at whist. Lamb was very chatty, and altogether as I could wish.

"March 9:—Breakfasted with Lamb, and after breakfast we had several good rubbers of whist together. And playing twice, did not leave off till one. I afterwards sat alone with Miss L. till near two."

On March 26th Lamb had tea with Robinson at the Temple, and afterwards they went together to Cary's. We see him again in London in May. John Payne Collier, in his *Old Man's Diary*, records, under the date May 15th, 1832, that he went to dinner at W. Harness's to meet Mary Russell Mitford, and others. "In the evening, the Lambs joined the party, and Charles was joked about the charming young Quakeress who had lived in the same street in Pentonville where Lamb had lodged: she generally wore white, and somebody present called her 'a white witch.' 'No,' (said Lamb), 'if a witch at all, as she lived at the *last house* in our street, she must be the Witch of *End-door*.'"

On Saturday, May 26th, Robinson dined at Talfourd's to meet Lamb and Miss Isola. He writes: "May 27, Sunday:—Before I arose C. Lamb was thundering at my door. He had slept with his clothes on all night and came out not knowing what to do with himself. I persuaded him to breakfast with me, thinking that at least as an object of curiosity my friends would be glad of the incident. Quayle and Paynter breakfasted with me, and Strutt also stepped down, and we had a desultory chat till past 11 with L. who made himself as agreeable as he could, but I suspect he disappointed my party.

"May 28:—I was reading Boccaccio when Lamb was again at my door. He however did not stay, but I made a cup of coffee for him. He had slept at Talfourd's again with his clothes on. Yet in the midst of this half crazy irregularity he was so full of sensibility that speaking of his sister he had tears in his eyes. And he talked about his favourite poems with his usual warmth, praising Andrew Marvell extravagantly."

On July 11th Lamb had a new visitor, "Christopher

North" (John Wilson); but no record of their meeting remains beyond the circumstance that during a long walk they entered an inn and Lamb was delighted to find that the great Scotchman liked porter too. With Christopher North were Alexander Blair and Moxon.

Wilson wrote of Lamb in 1833: "Charles Lamb ought really not to abuse Scotland in the pleasant way he so often does in the sylvan glades of Enfield; for Scotland loves Charles Lamb; but he is wayward and wilful in his wisdom, and conceits that many a cockney is a better man even than Christopher North. But what will not Christopher forgive to genius and goodness! Even Lamb, bleating libels on his native land. Nay, he learns lessons of humanity even from the mild malice of Elia, and breathes a blessing on him and his household in their bower of rest." Coleridge remarked of this sentiment that it was very sweet, and gratified him much.

On July 13th Robinson writes to Dorothy Wordsworth, "Poor Mary Lamb is again ill. Charles was lately in town—in very good bodily health." On the 23rd Robinson returned the visit:—

"July 23rd:—I set off and walked to Enfield to see Charles Lamb. I had a delightful walk, reading Goethe's 'Winckelmann.' I reached Lamb at the lucky moment before tea—he was with Miss Isola. After tea he and I took a pleasant walk together. He was in excellent health and in tolerable spirits. He spoke of his sister with composure. She is now in confinement, but he says she suffers nothing. It is only before and after she entirely loses her mind that she is very wretched and suffers grievously. L. was to-night quite eloquent in praise of Miss Isola. He says she is the most sensible girl and best female talker he knows; he wants to see her well married, great as the loss would be to him. I sat up chatting with L. till past 11 o'clock, and I slept at his house—or rather at the Westwoods'. By the bye, I find he does not like

either the old man or his wife, a circumstance very annoying in his dependent state.

"July 24th :—I read Goethe in bed. I was, however, summoned to breakfast at eight, and after breakfast read some Italian with Miss Isola, whom Lamb is teaching Italian without knowing the language himself. I then walked with C. Lamb and Miss I. We would have gone to the Badams', but they were gone out."

We now come to the visit from Landor, whom Robinson took to Enfield on September 28th, 1832. Writing to Landor on October 20th, 1831, he had said: "I have just seen Charles and Mary Lamb living in absolute solitude at Enfield. I found your poems lying open before Lamb. Both tipsy and sober he is ever muttering 'Rose Aylmer.'[1] But it is not those lines only that have a curious fascination for him. He is always turning to 'Gebir' for things that haunt him in the same way." (Landor, replying on November 2nd, 1831, remarked, "Wonderful that Charles Lamb should like the poem of mine which I wrote while cleaning my teeth before going to bed. However the night of sorrow was really devoted to the object.")

I quote again from Robinson's *Diary* :—

"September 28th :—Landor breakfasted with me, and also Worsley,[2] who came to supply Hare's place. After an agreeable chat, we drove down to Edmonton, and walked over the fields to Enfield, where Charles Lamb and his sister were ready dressed to receive us.

[1] Ah! what avails the sceptred race!
Ah! what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

[2] Worsley, a friend of Crabb Robinson, was a partner in Whitebread's brewery.

We had scarcely an hour to chat with them; but it was enough to make both Landor and Worsley express themselves afterwards delighted with the person of Mary Lamb; and pleased with the conversation of Lamb, though I thought L. by no means at his ease. Miss Lamb quite silent. Nothing in the conversation recollectable. Lamb gave Landor White's *Falstaff's Letters*. Emma Isola just showed herself. Landor pleased with her, and has since written verses on her."

Landor, whose age was almost identical with Lamb's—he was eleven days older, but he lived thirty years longer—wrote these lines in memory of his hour's visit:—

> Once, and once only, have I seen thy face,
> Elia! once only has thy tripping tongue
> Run o'er my breast, yet never has been left
> Impression on it stronger or more sweet.
> Cordial old man! what youth was in thy years,
> What wisdom in thy levity, what truth
> In every utterance of that purest soul!
> Few are the spirits of the glorified
> I'd spring to earlier at the gate of Heaven.

In sending a copy of these verses to Lady Blessington, Landor remarked, "I say *tripping* tongue, for Charles Lamb stammered and spoke hurriedly. He did not think it worth while to put on a fine new coat to come down and see me in, as poor Coleridge did, but met me as if I had been a friend of twenty years' standing; indeed, he told me I had been so, and shewed me some things I had written much longer ago, and had utterly forgotten. The world will never see again two such delightful volumes as 'The Essays of Elia'; no man living is capable of writing the worst twenty pages of them. The Continent has Zadig and Gil Blas, we have Elia and Sir Roger de Coverley."

During his visit Landor was asked to contribute a poem to Emma Isola's album, and shortly afterwards he sent these verses:—

TO EMMA ISOLA

Etrurian domes, Pelasgian walls,
Live fountains, with their nymphs around,
Terraced and citron-scented halls,
Skies smiling upon sacred ground—

The giant Alps, averse to France,
Point with impatient pride to those,
Calling the Briton to advance,
Amid eternal rocks and snows—

I dare not bid him stay behind,
I dare not tell him where to see
The fairest form, the purest mind,
Ausonia! that e'er sprang from thee.

Lamb acknowledged the poem in this letter :—

"Dear Sir, pray accept a little volume. 'Tis a legacy from Elia, you'll see. Silver and Gold had he none, but such as he had, left he you. I do not know how to thank you for attending to my request about the Album. I thought you would never remember it. Are not you proud and thankful, Emma?

"Yes, *very, both*—

"Emma Isola.

Many things I had to say to you, which there was not time for. *One* why should I forget? 'tis for Rose Aylmer, which has a charm I cannot explain. I lived upon it for weeks.—

"Next I forgot to tell you I knew all your Welch annoyancers, the measureless Beethams. I knew a quarter of a mile of them. 17 brothers and 16 sisters, as they appear to me in memory. There was one of them that used to fix his long legs on my fender, and tell a story of a shark, every night, endless, immortal. How have I grudged the salt sea ravener not having had his gorge of him!

"The shortest of the daughters measured 5 foot eleven without her shoes. Well, some day we may confer about them. But they were tall. Surely I have discover'd the longitude—

" Sir, If you can spare a moment, I should be happy to hear from you—that rogue Robinson detained your verses, till I call'd for them. Don't entrust a bit of prose to the rogue, but believe me

" Your obliged

C. L."

In an undated letter to Moxon, which belongs, I fancy, to the end of 1832, Lamb tells of the death of Mrs. Reynolds, his old schoolmistress, adding that, by thus ceasing to need her allowance, she has " virtually at least bequeath'd me a legacy of £32 per Ann." He adds, " my other pensioner [Morgan, I suppose : see Chapter XXXIII] is safe housed in the Workhouse, which gets me £10." He is thus " richer by both legacies £42 per ann.—For a loss of a loss is as good as a gain of a gain."

In late November or early December Moxon had again become the proprietor of a periodical, the *Reflector*, a weekly paper of which John Forster, then a young man in his twenty-first year, was the editor. Lamb's article on the " Barrenness of Imagination," which he had begun for the *Englishman's Magazine*, was to be printed in the new venture ; but once again Moxon seems to have miscalculated the cost, and the *Reflector* was given up after three numbers, before Lamb's luckless paper can have proceeded very far. It was eventually printed in full in the *Athenæum*. Writing to Moxon concerning the *Reflector*, Lamb says, " This is my notion. Wait till you are able to throw away a round sum (say £1500) upon a speculation, and then —don't do it." All trace of the *Reflector* has disappeared.

On December 31st, in a curious letter to Louisa Badams, Lamb tells how he has been suspected of complicity in the murder of Mr. Danby at Enfield on December 19th. The story is considered to be one of Lamb's inventions ; but it seems true enough ; and country policemen will suspect anybody.

This is the story: "On the night of our murder (an hour or two before it) the maid being busy, I went out to order an additional pint of porter for Moxon, who had surprised us with a late visit. Now I never go out quite disinterested upon such occasions. And I beg'd a half pint of ale at the bar, which our sweet-faced landlady good humour'dly complied with, asking me into the parlour, but a side door was just open that disclosed a more cheerful blaze, and I enter'd where four people were engaged over Dominoes. One of them, Fare, invited me to join in it, partly out of impudence, I believe; however, not to balk a Xmas frolic, I complied, and played with Danby, but soon gave over, having forgot the game. I was surprised with D. challenging me as having known me in the Temple. He must have been a child then. I did not recognise him, but perfectly remembered his father, who was a hairdresser in the Temple. This was all that pass'd, as I went away with my beer. Judge my surprise when the next morning I was summoned before Dr. Creswell, to say what I knew of the transaction. My examination was conducted with all delicacy, and of course I was soon dismissed. I was afraid of getting into the Papers, but I was pleased to find myself only noticed, as a 'Gentleman whose name we could not gather——' Poor D.! the few words I spoke to him were to remind him of a trick Jem White play'd off upon his father. . . . I have felt queer ever since. It has almost sicken'd me of the Crown & Horseshoe, and I shan't hastily go into the tap room again."

At the beginning of 1833 was issued Lamb's last book—*The Last Essays of Elia*. The publication led to a little difficulty with John Taylor, of Taylor & Hessey, who seems to have set up a claim of copyright in the essays that had appeared in the *London Magazine*. His claim was resisted by Moxon, and apparently came to nothing; but in a letter to Procter, published in

his *Autobiographical Fragment*, there is the suggestion that Lamb himself offered to meet Taylor's demand, although quite aware of its illegality. That he was not allowed to do so we know from the circumstance that Taylor and Moxon were at law later in the year. Moxon ultimately won. In his correspondence with Moxon on the subject, Lamb incidentally remarks that *Elia*, in volume form, brought him in £30 profit, but he never succeeded in getting the money.

Copies of the *Last Essays* were sent to Coleridge, Barton, Manning (at Sir George Tuthill's, Cavendish Square), to Landor and to Wordsworth, who liked best "Old China" and "The Wedding." The volume, although it contains such beautiful things as "Blakesmoor in H——shire," "Old China" and "Barbara S——," and such admirable pieces of humour as "Captain Jackson" and "Amicus Redivivus," was even less likely to be popular than its predecessor. And its price—nine shillings—was rather high.

Writing to Louisa Badams on February 15th Lamb says that Emma Isola, Mary and himself have "got thro' the Inferno with the help of Cary—and Mary is in for it: she is commencing Tasso." In the same month he congratulates Talfourd on becoming a Serjeant; and there is a note to Charles Wentworth Dilke, containing the sonnet to Edith Southey entitled "Christian Names of Women," which was printed in the *Athenæum* on March 9th. In one of the several brief undated notes to Dilke, belonging to this period, Lamb asks for the loan of some books. "Dog's leaves ensured! Any light stuff: no natural history or useful learning, such as Pyramids, Catacombs, Giraffes, Adventures in Southern Africa, &c. &c. . . . Novels for the last two years, or further back—nonsense of any period."

In a letter to Moxon on March 30th, 1833, we have, I think, the first hint of the little romance that was to rob the Lambs of their adopted daughter. "Mary

and E.," says Lamb, "do not dream of anything we have discussed." I imagine the passage to refer to Moxon's avowal of his love for Miss Isola. In a very short time, as we shall see, he was an accepted suitor. He had just moved to new premises in Dover Street, and had once more become an author, with a little collection of sonnets, which were reviewed, almost certainly by Lamb, in the *Athenæum* of April 13th. These sonnets, with additions, were three years later issued again, in two parts. The love sonnets of the first part cannot, I think, refer to Miss Isola; but those of the second undoubtedly do.

Later, Moxon wrote two sonnets on Charles Lamb, which though they belong more fittingly to the close of this story, I should like to quote here :—

HERE sleeps beneath this bank, where daisies grow,
The kindliest sprite earth holds within her breast;
In such a spot I would this frame should rest,
When I to join my friend far hence shall go.
His only mate is now the minstrel lark
Who chaunts her morning music o'er his bed,
Save she who comes each evening, ere the bark
Of watch-dog gathers drowsy folds, to shed
A sister's tears. Kind Heaven, upon her head
Do thou in dove-like guise thy spirit pour,
And in her aged path some flow'rets spread
Of earthly joy, should Time for her in store
Have weary days and nights, ere she shall greet
Him whom she longs in Paradise to meet.

RECEIVE him to thy arms, melodious shade!
Thou know'st his worth, for round one fountain ye
Together play'd, green wreaths of poesy
Twining for your young brows that shall not fade.
Few were your summers, when your reverend pile,
Rear'd by good Edward, youthful king, whose dress
Marks still the Christ-boy 'mong the crowds that press
Round holy Paul's, you entered with a smile!
Methinks I see you 'neath those cloisters grey
Conning apart some Bard of elder days,
Spenser perchance, or Chaucer's pilgrim lay;
Or doth La Mancha's Knight your wonder raise?
Methinks I see you as of old ye sate
Within those walls with studious brows elate!

Moxon wrote well of Lamb also in prose, in 1835. I quote certain passages: "He was an admirable Critic, and was always willing to exercise the art he so much excelled in for the fame of others. We have seen him almost blind with poring over the endless and illegible Manuscripts that were submitted to him. On these occasions, how he would long to find out something good, something that he could speak kindly of; for to give another pain (as he writes in a letter now before us) was to give himself greater. [Mary Lamb made the same remark many years before in a letter to Miss Betham.]

"His tastes, in many respects, were most singular. He preferred Wardour Street and Seven Dials to fields that were Elysian. The disappearance of the old clock from St. Dunstan's church drew tears from him; nor could he ever pass without emotion the place where Exeter Change once stood. The removal had spoilt a reality in Gay. The Passer-by, he said, no longer saw 'the combs dangle in his face.' . . . The Garden of Eden, he used to say, must have been a dull place. He had a strong aversion to roast beef and to fowls, and to any wines but port and sherry. Tripe and cow-heel were to him delicacies—rare dainties!

"All his books were without portraits; nor did he ever preserve, with two exceptions, a single letter.[1] He had a humorous method of testing the friendship of his visitors; it was, whether in their walks with him they would taste the tap of mine Host at the Horse-Shoe, or at the Rose and Crown, or at the Rising Sun! But a member of the Temperance Society, on these occasions, could not have been more abstemious. A single glass would suffice. We have seen ladies enter with him—the fastidious 'Barbara S.'; and great Poets—the Author of the *Excursion* himself! He was no politician, though, in his youth, he once assisted

[1] A slight exaggeration. He had preserved many of Manning's which were returned to their writer.

to draw through the streets Charles James Fox!

"Nor was he a man of business. He could not pack up a trunk, nor tie up a parcel. Yet he was methodical, punctual in his appointments, and an excellent pay-master. A debt haunted him! He could not live in another person's books! He wished to leave a friend a small sum of money; but 'to have done with the thing,' as he said, gave it him beforehand! If an acquaintance dropped in of an evening before supper, he would instantly, without saying a word, put on his hat, and go and order an extra supply of porter. He has done this for us a hundred times! Relics and Keepsakes had no charm for him! A traveller once brought him some acorns from an Ilex that grew over the Tomb of Virgil. He threw them at the Hackney Coachmen as they passed by his window![1] And there is a story, that he once sat to an artist of his acquaintance for a whole series of the British Admirals; but for what publication we never heard!" This book would be a discovery indeed. I have failed to find it.

Crabb Robinson was at Enfield on April 9th, 1833. He writes: "April 9th:—I reached the Lambs at tea-time. I found them unusually well in health, but not comfortable. They seemed dissatisfied with their landlord and landlady; and they have sold all their furniture, so that [they] seem obliged to remain lodgers. I spent the evening playing whist; and after L. and his sister went to bed, I read in his album (Holcroft's 'Travels' pasted with extracts in MS. and clippings out of newspapers, &c.). Lamb says that he can write acrostics and album verses, and such things, at request, with a facility that approaches that of the Italian *Improvisatori*; but that he has great

[1] In Messrs. Hallward & Hill's school edition of *Elia* I find the following interesting commentary upon this incident: "It would almost seem that the dead were, in a sense, alive to him, and that he resented anything that interfered with this fancy."

difficulty in composing a poem or prose writing that he himself wishes should be excellent. The things that cost nothing are worth nothing. He says he should be happy had he some literary task. Hayward has sent him his 'Faust.' He thinks it well done, but he thinks nothing of the original. How inferior to Marlowe's play! One scene of that is worth the whole! What has Margaret to do with Faust? Marlowe makes Faust, after the original story, possess Helen of Greece!!![1]

"April 10:—I read in bed all sorts of things. Looked into Tennyson's poems. They seem to have fancy but nothing else. We played three rubbers of whist after breakfast. I left them after one."

In April Lamb was busy upon a prologue and epilogue for Sheridan Knowles's comedy "The Wife: A Tale of Mantua," produced on April 24th. On the 25th he writes to Moxon in a way that suggests that the engagement was now formally arranged: "We desire to have you here dining un-Westwooded, and I will try and get you a bottle of choice port. I have transferred the stock I told you [of] to Emma"; but the dinner had to be postponed owing to a visitation of influenza to the Westwood cottage. The old man, says Lamb, was all but dying.

Mary Lamb seems to have passed from influenza to her usual malady and to have been moved to Mr. Walden's in Church Street, Edmonton, where she had been nursed before; and her brother on this occasion followed her. It was their last move together.

Writing to Wordsworth at the end of May, Lamb says: "I am emancipated from most *hated* and *detestable* people, the Westwoods. I am with attentive people, and younger.—I am 3 or 4 miles nearer the Great City, Coaches half-price less, and going always, of which I will avail myself. I have few friends left there, one or two tho' most beloved. But London

[1] See the letter to Harrison Ainsworth of Dec. 9th, 1823.

Streets and faces cheer me inexpressibly, tho' of the latter not one known one were remaining."

Earlier in the same letter he writes, concerning his troubles: "To lay a little more load on it, a circumstance has happen'd, *cujus pars magna fui*, and which at another crisis I should have more rejoiced in. I am about to lose my old and only walk-companion, whose mirthful spirits were the 'youth of our house,' Emma Isola. I have her here now for a little while, but she is too nervous properly to be under such a roof, so she will make short visits, be no more an inmate. With my perfect approval, and more than concurrence, she is to be wedded to Moxon at the end of Aug^st^. So 'perish the roses and the flowers' [1]—how is it?"

It is now too late to meet with any one who can remember the Lambs at Edmonton; but in 1875 a few persons were living who had a little to tell, and the substance of their recollections was contributed to the *Globe* under the title "Charles Lamb at Edmonton." Of the Waldens Mr. H. F. Cox, the writer, learned little that was new: they "made their living by keeping in gentle restraint those whose attacks were harmless or intermittent, and whose friends looked for more humane treatment than was obtainable in the asylums of those days. Mr. Walden had some professional qualifications for his task, having been, or then being, a keeper at a neighbouring 'Bethlehem.' Mr. and Mrs. Walden died on the same day, and are buried in Edmonton churchyard, where Charles and Mary Lamb lie.

"Nearly opposite the cottage," says the writer, "and the first object on which Lamb's eye would rest as he pushed at the high iron gate that shut in his strip of garden—stands a charity school for girls, 'a structure of hope, founded in faith, on the basis of charity, 1784,' as a legend on the wall testifies. The mistress of this little school, still living in a hale old age, was often drawn to the window by Lamb's cheery

[1] *The Excursion*, vii., 980.

voice as he issued from Mr. Walden's, chatting loudly with any one he used to meet. He would accost passers-by, she says, and walk and talk with them down the street. Otherwise he was not noticeable, except as a spare, middle-sized man, in pantaloons. Mary Lamb would sometimes, but not often, be seen in the street alone. The reputation of insanity attaches, in the schoolmistress's mind, to the brother as well as the sister. . . . Mr. Walden's was, no doubt, regarded with curiosity and even awe by the charity girls of those times, as the abode of certain strange individuals who came and went not entirely at their own will, and did odd things when left alone. The schoolmistress, perhaps, sharing this feeling, may have exaggerated Charles Lamb's eccentricities from the fact that he was brave enough and loving enough to follow his sister into the Walden's Asylum."

In October, 1878, Mr. Cox wrote on the same subject in the *Dublin University Magazine*, when he added that there was a tradition in Edmonton that Lamb was very kind to the poor and was in the habit of visiting the old people in the alms-houses.

Walden Cottage, or Lamb's Cottage as it is now called, close to Lower Edmonton station, has hardly received the addition of a tin-tack since Lamb's day. A gloomier house can hardly be imagined. It has no memorial tablet. I imagine Lamb's sitting-room to have been, as i both his Enfield homes, on the ground floor, looking on the garden. To get to the "Bell" at Edmonton—his morning walk—Lamb would turn to the left on passing through the gate. The "Rose and Crown" by the church has been added to since his day, and a bar now takes the place of the old entrance to the stables; but otherwise it is the same.

In June—his sister being still ill—Lamb writes to Mary Betham, sister of his old friend Matilda, to acknowledge a little legacy of £30 left to Mary Lamb by another sister Anne Betham. Writing to Moxon on July 14th

he says that he is just off to Widford to see Mrs. Randal Norris, for a day or so, and that last night Charles Valentine Le Grice gave him a dinner at the Bell at Edmonton, "where we talk'd of what old friends were taken or left in the 30 years since we had met." Le Grice, now a rich widower, had given up his clerical duties and was settled at Trereife, in Cornwall. He was sixty in February; Lamb fifty-eight. A few days later, on July 19th, Lamb dined with Rickman, again at the Bell, to meet Godwin and be reconciled with him after "a slight coolness." How the coolness grew I do not know, but cordiality was restored. Godwin, who was now busy on his *Lives of the Necromancers*, was an old man of seventy-seven.

Although Mary Lamb had not recovered, the date of Emma Isola's marriage was fixed for July 30th, as we gather from the very charming letter to Moxon of July 24th:—

"For God's sake, give Emma no more watches. *One* has turn'd her head. She is arrogant, and insulting. She said something very unpleasant to our old Clock in the passage, as if he did not keep time, and yet he had made her no appointment. She takes it out every instant to look at the moment-hand. She lugs us out into the fields, because there the bird-boys ask you, 'Pray, Sir, can you tell us what's a Clock,' and she answers them punctually. She loses all her time looking 'what the time is.' I overheard her whispering, 'Just so many hours, minutes, &c. to Tuesday—I think St. George's goes too slow'— This little present of Time, why, 'tis Eternity to her—

"What can make her so fond of a gingerbread watch?

"She has spoil'd some of the movements. Between ourselves, she has kissed away 'half past 12,' which I suppose to be the canonical hour in Hanover Sq.

"Well, if 'love me, love my watch,' answers, she will keep time to you—

"It goes right by the Horse Guards—
[*On the next page :—*]
"Emma hast kist this yellow wafer—a hint.

"DEAREST M.

"Never mind opposite nonsense. She does not love you for the watch, but the watch for you.

"I will be at the wedding, and keep the 30 July as long as my poor months last me, as a festival gloriously.

"Your *ever* *ELIA.*

"We have not heard from Cambridge. I will write the moment we do.

"Edmonton, 24th July, 3·20 post mer. minutes 4 instants by Emma's watch."

The wedding was celebrated on July 30th. In describing it in a letter to Louisa Badams, Lamb says that in the rôle of grave father he behaved tolerably well. Emma looked as pretty as Pamela. "I tripped a little at the altar, was engaged in admiring the altar-piece, but, recalled seasonably by a Parsonic rebuke, 'Who gives this woman!' was in time to reply resolutely 'I do.'" As we see from the notes that follow, Mary Lamb recovered either on the day of the wedding, or immediately after.

"DEAR MR. AND MRS. MOXON—

"Time very short. I wrote to Miss Fryer, and had the sweetest letter about you, Emma, that ever friendship dictated. 'I am full of good wishes, I am crying with good wishes,' she says; but you shall see it.—

"Dear Moxon, I take your writing most kindly, and shall most kindly your writing from Paris—

"I want to crowd another letter to Miss Fry into the little time after dinner before Post time.

"So with 20000 congratulations,

"Yours, C. L.

"I am calm, sober, happy. Turn over for the reason.

"I got home from Dover St., by Evens, *half as sober as a judge*. I am turning over a new leaf, as I hope you will now.

[On the next leaf Mary Lamb wrote :—]

"My dear Emma and Edward Moxon,

"Accept my sincere congratulations, and imagine more good wishes than my weak nerves will let me put into good set words. The dreary blank of *unanswered questions* which I ventured to ask in vain was cleared up on the wedding-day by Mrs. W. taking a glass of wine, and, with a total change of countenance, begged leave to drink Mr. and Mrs. Moxon's health. It restored me, from that moment : as if by an electrical stroke : to the entire possession of my senses—I never felt so calm and quiet after a similar illness as I do now. I feel as if all tears were wiped from my eyes, and all care from my heart.

"Mary Lamb."

At the foot of this letter Charles Lamb added :—

"Wednesday.

"Dears Again

"Your letter interrupted a seventh game at Picquet which *we* were having, after walking to *Wright's* and purchasing shoes. We pass our time in cards, walks, and reading. We attack Tasso soon. C. L.

"Never was such a calm, or such a recovery. 'Tis her own words, undictated."

Lamb's verses to Moxon on his marriage, which were printed in the *Athenæum* for December 7th, 1833, run thus :—

> What makes a happy wedlock ? What has fate
> Not given to thee in thy well-chosen mate ?
> Good sense—good humour ;—these are trivial things,

Dear M—, that each trite encomiast sings.
But she hath these, and more. A mind exempt
From every low-bred passion, where contempt,
Nor envy, nor detraction, ever found
A harbour yet; an understanding sound;
Just views of right and wrong; perception full
Of the deformed, and of the beautiful,
In life and manners; wit above her sex,
Which, as a gem, her sprightly converse decks;
Exuberant fancies, prodigal of mirth,
To gladden woodland walk, or winter hearth;
A noble nature, conqueror in the strife
Of conflict with a hard discouraging life,
Strengthening the veins of virtue, past the power
Of those whose days have been one silken hour,
Spoil'd fortune's pamper'd offspring; a keen sense
Alike of benefit, and of offence.
With reconcilement quick, that instant springs
From the charged heart with nimble angel wings:
While grateful feelings, like a signet sign'd
By a strong hand, seem burnt into her mind.
If these, dear friend, a dowry can confer
Richer than land, thou hast them all in her;
And beauty, which some hold the chiefest boon,
Is in thy bargain for a make-weight thrown.[1]

The letters for the rest of 1833, which are unimportant, are chiefly to Moxon concerning family matters. That Mary Lamb continued in good health we know from the correspondence and from Crabb Robinson's remark in a letter to Wordsworth, on November 3rd: "I saw Lamb and his sister a few days ago. They were looking uncommonly well." Wordsworth replied: "We were delighted to have so good an account of the Lambs. Give our kindest love when you see them, and tell L. that his works are our delight, as is evidenced better than by words,—by April weather of smiles and tears whenever we read them."

On November 30th Lamb's "Thoughts on Presents of Game" were printed in the *Athenæum*, wherein he

[1] Edward Moxon died on June 3rd, 1858; his widow, who might be called the last of the Lamb family, died at Brighton on February 2nd, 1891, aged eighty-two.

advanced hare to the place in his affections once occupied by Roast Pig. It was his very last piece of writing quite in his old manner, if we except the final paragraph in the *Table Talk* published a few months later. These are the "Thoughts":—

Time was, when Elia was not arrived at his taste, that he preferred to all luxuries a roasted Pig. But he disclaims all such green-sickness appetites in future, though he hath to acknowledge the receipt of many a delicacy in that kind from correspondents—good, but mistaken men—in consequence of their erroneous supposition, that he had carried up into mature life the prepossessions of childhood. From the worthy Vicar of Enfield he acknowledges a tithe contribution of extraordinary sapor. The ancients must have loved hares. Else why adopt the word *lepores* (obviously from *lepus*) but for some subtle analogy between the delicate flavour of the latter, and the finer relishes of wit in what we most poorly translate *pleasantries*. The fine madnesses of the poet are the very decoction of his diet. Thence is he hare-brained. Harum-scarum is a libellous unfounded phrase, of modern usage. 'Tis true the hare is the most circumspect of animals, sleeping with her eye open. Her ears, ever erect, keep them in that wholesome exercise, which conduces them to form the very tit-bit of the admirers of this noble animal. Noble will I call her, in spite of her detractors, who from occasional demonstrations of the principle of self-preservation (common to all animals) infer in her a defect of heroism. Half a hundred horsemen, with thrice the number of dogs, scour the country in pursuit of puss across three counties; and because the well-flavoured beast, weighing the odds, is willing to evade the hue and cry, with her delicate ears shrinking perchance from discord—comes the grave Naturalist, Linnæus perchance or Buffon, and gravely sets down the Hare as a—timid animal. Why, Achilles or Bully Dawson, would have declined the preposterous combat.

In fact, how light of digestion we feel after a hare! How tender its processes after swallowing! What chyle it promotes! How etherial! as if its living celerity were a type of its nimble coursing through the animal juices. The notice might be longer. It is intended less as a Natural History of the Hare, than a cursory thanks to the country "good Unknown." The hare has many friends, but none sincerer than ELIA.

One of the last letters of the year is to Samuel Rogers, thanking him for a copy of the new edition of his poems, illustrated by Turner and Stothard, and telling him of a sonnet to himself in the *Times*, and one

to Stothard, "in which he is as everything and you as nothing," in the *Athenæum*. At the end Lamb remarks: "It is not the flatteringest compliment, in a letter to an author, to say you have not read his book yet. But the devil of a reader he must be who prances through it in five minutes, and no longer have I received the parcel. It was a little tantalizing to me to receive a letter from Landor, *Gebir* Landor, from Florence, to say he was just sitting down to read my 'Elia,' just received, but the letter was to go out before the reading. There are calamities in authorship which only authors know."

CHAPTER L

1834

Mary Lamb and Her Brother—Her "Rambling Chat"—The Martins in Trouble—Lamb and Samuel Warren—N. P. Willis and the Lambs—The Death of Coleridge—The Testimony of the Two Friends—The Beginning of the End—Mr. Fuller Russell's Reminiscences of Edmonton—Thomas Westwood Again—Bulwer on Lamb—The Accident—Lamb's Death—Wordsworth's Epitaph—Cary's Epitaph—Lamb and Cowper.

OUR first glimpse of Lamb in 1834, the last year of his life, is in Macready's diary. On January 9th the tragedian supped at Talfourd's to meet Lamb, among others present being John Forster, the Barron Fields and Moxon. "I noted," says Macready, "the odd saying of Lamb's, that 'the last breath he drew in he wished might be through a pipe and exhaled in a pun.'" The remark may perhaps be considered as additional evidence that Lamb still smoked.

A letter to Mary Betham tells us that Mary Lamb, after being well from the end of July to the end of December, had fallen ill again almost on New Year's Day, 1834. She remained ill until the end of April at least. On February 10th, his fifty-ninth birthday, Lamb was at Dover Street, with the Moxons, as he tells Miss Fryer, an old schoolfellow of Emma Moxon's, adding the following sad yet beautiful words concerning his sister: "It is no new thing for me to be left to my sister. When she is not violent, her rambling chat is better to me than the sense and sanity of this world. Her heart is obscured, not buried; it breaks out occasionally; and one can discern a strong mind struggling with the billows that have gone over it. I could be nowhere happier than under the same roof with her. Her memory is unnaturally strong; and

from ages past, if we may so call the earliest records of our poor life, she fetches thousands of names and things that never would have dawned upon me again, and thousands from the ten years she lived before me. What took place from early girlhood to her coming of age principally lives again (every important thing and every trifle) in her brain, with the vividness of real presence. For twelve hours incessantly she will pour out without intermission all her past life, forgetting nothing, pouring out name after name to the Waldens, as a dream; sense and nonsense; truths and errors huddled together; a medley between inspiration and possession. What things we are! I know you will bear with me, talking of these things. It seems to ease me; for I have nobody to tell these things to now."

"Her rambling chat is better to me than the sense and sanity of this world"—that was one of the last things that Lamb wrote; and one of his earliest poems was the sonnet to his sister, ending thus:—

> Thou to me didst ever shew
> Fondest affection; and would'st oft-times lend
> An ear to the desponding love-sick lay,
> Weeping my sorrows with me, who repay
> But ill the mighty debt of love I owe,
> Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

Lamb, says Talfourd, speaks of his sister "pouring out memories of all the events and persons of her younger days;—but he does not mention, what I am able from repeated experiences to add, that her ramblings often sparkled with brilliant description and shattered beauty. She would fancy herself in the days of Queen Anne or George the First, and describe the brocaded dames and courtly manners, as though she had been bred among them, in the best style of the old comedy. It was all broken and disjointed, so that the hearer could remember little of her discourse; but the fragments were like the jewelled

speeches of Congreve, only shaken from their setting. There was sometimes even a vein of crazy logic running through them, associating things essentially most dissimilar, but connecting them by a verbal association in strange order. As a mere physical instance of deranged intellect, her condition was, I believe, extraordinary ; it was as if the finest elements of mind had been shaken into fantastic combinations like those of a kaleidoscope ;—but not for the purpose of exhibiting a curious phenomenon of mental aberration are the aspects of her insanity unveiled, but to illustrate the moral force of gentleness by which the faculties that thus sparkled when restraining wisdom was withdrawn, were subjected to its sway, in her periods of reason."

On February 22nd we have the last letter to Wordsworth, which characteristically was an appeal for help for a friend in difficulties. " The oldest and best friends I have left are in trouble. A branch of them (and they of the best stock of God's creatures, I believe) is establishing a school at Carlisle. Her name is Louisa Martin, her address 75 Castle Street, Carlisle ; her qualities (and her motives for this exertion) are the most amiable, most upright. For thirty years she has been tried by me, and on her behaviour I would stake my soul. O if you can recommend her, how would I love you—if I could love you better. Pray, pray, recommend her. She is as good a human creature,—next to my Sister, perhaps the most exemplary female I ever knew."

On March 20th Crabb Robinson's *Diary* contains this painful entry : " I had Barron Field to breakfast with me. Also Lamb . . . To have so excellent a creature with all his infirmities in one's room is delightful, but mixed with pain on account of the destruction he is rapidly bringing on himself."

On April 16th Lamb dined at Cary's, at the Museum. On the next day Crabb Robinson writes : " C. Lamb, by an old appointment, breakfasted with me. And

also Barron Field. I invited Warren; he was the great talker and told stories not without interest chiefly about scenes of execution which he has witnessed. . . . C. L. was in better health than when he came last." Warren was Samuel Warren, author of *Ten Thousand a Year*, and Lamb did not like him. During the morning Warren remarked that he did not know much French—for a gentleman; causing Lamb to interject that he also was deficient: he did not know much French—for a blackguard.

On May 10th we have the last letter to Manning: "You made me feel so funny, so happy-like; it was as if I was reading one of your old letters taken out at hazard any time between the last twenty years, 'twas so the same." Mary Lamb after nearly twenty weeks of illness was recovering. "We play Picquet, and it is like the old times a while, then goes off. . . . I walk 9 or 10 miles a day, always up the road, dear London-wards." On June 7th Crabb Robinson tells us that the recovery is complete. "Drove to Edmonton, where I found Charles Lamb and his Sister, both more comfortable than I have seen [them] together for a long time. I had a very agreeable rubber of whist with them."

To June 19th belongs the account of Lamb and his sister which was written by Nathaniel Parker Willis, the American poet and flâneur. Willis, then a young man of twenty-eight, was loitering observantly through Europe for the *New York Mirror*, to which paper, unknown to his English friends (with whom he passed for a diplomatist in the making), he was sending lively travel sketches under the title "Pencillings by the Way." These were collected into an agreeable volume in 1835, and it is there that the breakfast party with the Lambs is described. In the course of his lion-hunting campaign in London, Willis met Crabb Robinson and requested an introduction to Elia. Robinson's reminiscences tell the story:—

" June 19, 1834 :—I had this morning at breakfast Charles and Mary Lamb, who came expressly to be seen by Willis the Yankee. I had had Willis before, and I had seen him at Lady Blessington's. But I have reserved till to-day the mention of this man. He brought to me some weeks before a letter of introduction from W. S. Landor, speaking of him as an Attaché to the American Legation—a poet and litterateur. He especially wished to know Ch. & M. Lamb. When he first came to me, his appearance was that of a dandy. One who strives to be genteel. He had till now excited no suspicion. Nor was there any reason to suspect him. The morning's breakfast was not remarkable. My journal says merely ' Poor M. L. was not strong, but C. L. was quiet.' W. was glad to have seen them." Robinson then remarks that Willis was not an Attaché, and that Landor was furious on discovering this fact and also that he was serving up his London acquaintance in the American press.

But Willis's indiscretions were not malicious, and his account of the breakfast with the Lambs in Robinson's rooms is good reading. " There was a rap at the door at last, and enter a gentleman in black small-clothes and gaiters, short and very slight in his person, his head set on his shoulders with a thoughtful, forward bent, his hair just sprinkled with gray, a beautiful deep-set eye, aquiline nose, and a very indescribable mouth. Whether it expressed most humour or feeling, good-nature of a kind of whimsical peevishness, or twenty other things which passed over it by turns, I cannot in the least be certain.

" His sister, whose literary reputation is associated very closely with her brother's, and who as the original of ' Bridget Elia ' is a kind of object for literary affection, came in after him. She is a small, bent figure, evidently a victim to ill-health, and hears with difficulty. Her face has been, I should think, a fine and handsome one, and her bright gray eye is still full of

intelligence and fire. They both seemed quite at home in our friend's chambers; and as there was to be no one else, we immediately drew round the breakfast-table. I had set a large arm-chair for Miss Lamb. 'Don't take it, Mary,' said Lamb, pulling it away from her very gravely, 'it looks as if you were going to have a tooth drawn.'

"The conversation was very local. Our host and his guest had not met for some weeks, and they had a great deal to say of some mutual friends. Perhaps in this way, however, I saw more of the author, for his manner of speaking of them, and the quaint humour with which he complained of one, and spoke well of another, was so in the vein of his inimitable writings, that I could have fancied myself listening to an audible composition of new Elia. Nothing could be more delightful than the kindness and affection between the brother and his sister, though Lamb was continually taking advantage of her deafness to mystify her with the most singular gravity upon every topic that was started. 'Poor Mary!' said he, 'she hears all of an epigram but the point.' 'What are you saying of me, Charles?' she asked. 'Mr. Willis,' said he, raising his voice, 'admires *your Confessions of a Drunkard* very much, and I was saying it was no merit of yours that you understood the subject.' We had been speaking of this admirable essay (which is his own) half an hour before.

"The conversation turned upon literature after a while, and our host could not express himself strongly enough in admiration of Webster's speeches, which he said were exciting the greatest attention among the politicians and lawyers of England. Lamb said, 'I don't know much of American authors. Mary, there, devours Cooper's novels with a ravenous appetite, with which I have no sympathy. The only American book I ever read twice, was the "Journal of Edward [John] Woolman," a quaker preacher and tailor,

whose character is one of the finest I ever met with. He tells a story or two about negro slaves, that brought the tears into my eyes. I can read no prose now, though Hazlitt sometimes, to be sure—but then Hazlitt is worth all modern prose-writers put together.'

"Mr. R. spoke of buying a book of Lamb's a few days before, and I mentioned my having bought a copy of 'Elia' the last day I was in America, to send as a parting gift to one of the most lovely and talented women in our country. 'What did you give for it?' said Lamb. 'About seven and sixpence.' 'Permit me to pay you that,' said he, and with the utmost earnestness he counted out the money upon the table. 'I never yet wrote anything that would sell,' he continued, 'I am the publisher's ruin. My last poem won't sell a copy. Have you seen it, Mr. Willis?' I had not. 'It's only eighteen-pence, and I'll give you sixpence towards it'; and he described to me where I should find it sticking up in a shop window in the Strand.[1]

"Lamb ate nothing, and complained in a querulous tone of the veal-pie. There was a kind of potted fish (of which I forget the name at this moment) which he had expected our friend would procure for him. He inquired whether there was not a morsel left perhaps in the bottom of the last pot. Mr. R. was not sure. 'Send and see,' said Lamb, 'and if the pot has been cleaned, bring me the cover. I think the sight of it would do me good.' The cover was brought, upon which there was a picture of the fish. Lamb kissed it with a reproachful look at his friend, and then left the table and began to wander round the room with a broken, uncertain step, as if he almost forgot to put one leg before the other. His sister rose after a while, and commenced walking up and down very much in the same manner on the opposite side of the table, and in the course of half an hour they took their leave.

[1] Lamb referred to *Satan in Search of a Wife.*

"To any one who loves the writings of Charles Lamb with but half my own enthusiasm, even these little particulars of an hour passed in his company will have an interest. To him who does not, they will seem dull and idle. Wreck as he certainly is, and must be, however, of what he was, I would rather have seen him for that single hour, than the hundred-and-one sights of London put together."

At the end of June we have this humorous scrap to Cowden Clarke referring to the Musical Festival in Westminster Abbey when Clara Novello was one of the singers and Vincent Novello was at the organ: "We heard the Music in the Abbey at Winchmore Hill! and the notes were incomparably soften'd by the distance. Novello's chromatics were distinctly audible. Clara was faulty in B flat. Otherwise she sang like an angel. The trombone, and Beethoven's walzes, were the best. Who played the oboe?"

On the morning of July 25th came a great sorrow, Coleridge died. He had long been ailing, but his death was comparatively sudden. Lamb was vexed by a request, which he thought was made too quickly, by the editor of the *Athenæum* for a few words about his old friend; but later, in November, in the album of a Mr. Keymer, a bookseller, he thus described his feelings:—

When I heard of the death of Coleridge, it was without grief. It seemed to me that he long had been on the confines of the next world,—that he had a hunger for eternity. I grieved then that I could not grieve. But since, I feel how great a part he was of me. His great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men and books, without an ineffectual turning and reference to him. He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations. He was a Grecian (or in the first form) at Christ's Hospital, where I was Deputy-Grecian; and the same subordination and deference to him I have preserved through a life-long acquaintance. Great in his writings, he was greatest in his conversation. In him was disproved that old maxim, that we should allow every one his share of talk. He would talk from morn to dewy eve, nor cease till far midnight; yet who ever would

interrupt him—who would obstruct that continuous flow of converse, fetched from Helicon or Zion ? He had the tact of making the unintelligible seem plain. Many who read the abstruser parts of his "Friend" would complain that his words did not answer to his spoken wisdom. They were identical. But he had a tone in oral delivery which seemed to convey sense to those who were otherwise imperfect recipients. He was my fifty-years-old friend without a dissention. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. I seem to love the house he died at more passionately than when he lived. I love the faithful Gilmans more than while they exercised their virtues towards him living. What was his mansion is consecrated to me a chapel.

Lamb did not attend Coleridge's funeral, but "shortly after," says Talfourd, "assured that his presence would be welcome, he went to Highgate. There he asked leave to see the nurse who had attended upon Coleridge ; and being struck and affected by the feeling she manifested towards his friend, insisted on her receiving five guineas from him,—a gratuity which seemed almost incomprehensible to the poor woman, but which Lamb could not help giving as an immediate expression of his own gratitude. From her he learned the effort by which Coleridge had suppressed the expression of his sufferings, and the discovery affected him even more than the news of his death. He would startle his friends sometimes by suddenly exclaiming, 'Coleridge is dead!' and then pass on to common themes, having obtained the momentary relief of oppressed spirits."

The Lambs had been much in Coleridge's thoughts at the end. On his death-bed he had written, in pencil, in a copy of his *Poetical Works*, against the poem "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," the words: "*Ch. and Mary Lamb—dear to my heart, yea, as it were, my heart. S. T. C. Aet.* 63, 1834. 1797-1834= 37 *years !*" (It was in the summer of 1797 that the poem was written, as we saw in Chapter XI.) Coleridge's will contained this clause : "And further, as a relief to my own feelings of the opportunity of men-

tioning their names, that I request of my executor, that a small plain gold mourning ring, with my hair, may be presented to the following persons, namely :— To my close friend and ever-beloved schoolfellow, Charles Lamb—and in the deep and almost life-long affection of which this is the slender record ; his equally-beloved sister, Mary Lamb, will know herself to be included." The names of five other friends followed.

Allsop, in his notes of a conversation with Lamb, writes that he spoke " with great feeling of Coleridge, and with a grateful sense of what he had been to him, adding after a recapitulation of the friends he admired or loved, ' But Coleridge is a glorious person,' and, with a smile of that peculiar sweetness so entirely his own: ' he teaches what is best.' " Gillman records that Lamb said of Coleridge, " his talk is as fine as an angel's."

Lamb, however, was not always so reverent with his friend, as we have occasionally seen. Many writers tell the story, now a commonplace, of his reply to Coleridge's question, " Charles, did you ever hear me preach ? "—" I never heard you do anything else." [1] And Leigh Hunt records his remark on their walk home after an evening wholly occupied by Coleridge in a theological monologue, " You mustn't mind Coleridge, Hunt ; he's so full of his fun." But Lamb's drollest story of all touching his friend—related by an American writer, John Dix, in a little book otherwise of no value, entitled *Lions Living and Dead*, 1852—is to the effect that one day on his way to the city he met Coleridge, " brimful of some new idea, and in spite of my assuring him that time was precious, he drew me within the door of an unoccupied garden by the road-side, and there, sheltered from observation by a hedge of evergreens, he took me by the button of my coat, and closing his eyes commenced an elo-

[1] Coleridge himself in the *Table Talk* tells us that Lamb " translated my motto ' Sermoni propriora ' by ' properer for a sermon.' "

quent discourse, waving his right hand gently, as the musical words flowed in an unbroken stream from his lips. I listened entranced; but the striking of a church-clock recalled me to a sense of duty. I saw it was of no use to attempt to break away, so taking advantage of his absorption in his subject, I, with my penknife, quietly severed the button from my coat, and decamped. Five hours afterwards, in passing the same garden, on my way home, I heard Coleridge's voice, and on looking in, there he was, with closed eyes,—the button in his fingers,—and his right hand gracefully waving, just as when I left him. He had never missed me!" The story is of course untrue, but as a sidelight on Coleridge's later conversational manner it could hardly be better.

Coleridge's references to Lamb are numerous—Leslie the painter records that he told him he held Lamb's character "sacred"—but one of the least known and most interesting is that which follows, from the *Monthly Repository* in 1835, being part of a conversation that was taken down on the evening it occurred: "Charles Lamb has more totality and individuality of character than any other man I know, or have ever known in all my life. In most men we distinguish between the different powers of their intellect as one being predominant over the other. The genius of Wordsworth is greater than his talent, though considerable. The talent of Southey is greater than his genius, though respectable; and so on. But in Charles Lamb it is altogether one; his genius is talent, and his talent is genius, and his heart is as whole and one as his head. The wild words that come from him sometimes on religious subjects would shock you from the mouth of any other man, but from him they seem mere flashes of fireworks. If an argument seem to his reason not fully true, he bursts out in that odd desecrating way; yet his will, the inward man, is, I well know, profoundly religious. Watch him, when alone, and

you will find him with either a Bible, or an old divine, or an old English poet; in such is his pleasure."

For some years the intercourse of the two friends had been only casual. Enfield and Highgate were far apart; Coleridge rarely left home; Lamb did not care to make so long a journey with the chance at the end of it of finding Coleridge ramparted by strangers. But as they both drew nearer the end the ancient tenderness of their early friendship, before the world had intervened, revived in the thoughts of each.

Little as he saw of him or heard from him, Coleridge was, next to Mary Lamb, the best-loved thing in Lamb's life in these last years. Not so much perhaps for what he was as for what he stood for: symbolising that remote past which, as he grew older and sadder and more lonely, increasingly dominated Lamb's mind. Emma Isola, much as he loved her, was too recent to count against this wistful preoccupation. So long as Coleridge lived there was still something to make life worth while: a tangible earnest of the old careless days. But when Coleridge died Lamb, I think, lost heart utterly. His sister he still had; but the responsibility was becoming too great, the periods of separation were too frequent and too shattering. Coleridge over there at Highgate, accessible if one wished, kept him in touch with the past, *was* the past. Coleridge dead, the world became foreign, peopled by strangers who were young and modern, lacking memories, controlled by new interests, ignorant of Oronooko and egg hot.

Lamb, I believe, began to die on July 25th. He survived his friend only five months. Wordsworth, in his "Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg," in 1835, coupled their names for all time in the stanzas:—

> Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
> From sign to sign, its stedfast course,
> Since every mortal power of Coleridge
> Was frozen at its marvellous source;

The 'rapt One, of the godlike forehead,
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth:
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

We have a glimpse of the Lambs at Edmonton in some reminiscences of Mr. J. Fuller Russell, who, then a young man, had sent Lamb a poem in manuscript, hoping for criticism, and followed it by one or two visits to Walden Cottage. He published, forty years later, in the *Guardian*, his account of what happened. On the first morning that he called—on August 5th, 1834—Lamb had not yet returned from his walk: "I was admitted into a small and pleasantly shaded parlour. The modest room was hung round with fine engravings by Hogarth, in dark frames. Books and magazines were scattered on the table, and on the old-fashioned window-seat. I chatted awhile with Miss Lamb—a meek, intelligent, very pleasant, and rather deaf, elderly lady, who told me that her brother had been gratified by parts of my poem, and had read them to her. 'Elia' came in soon after—a short, thin man. His dress was black—a capacious coat, knee-breeches, and gaiters, and he wore a white neck-handkerchief. His head was remarkably fine, and his dark and shaggy hair and eyebrows, heated face, and very piercing jet-black eyes gave to his appearance a singularly wild and striking expression. The sketch of him in *Fraser's Magazine* gives a true idea of his figure, but no portrait, I am sure, could do justice to his splendid countenance. He grasped me cordially by the hand, sat down, and taking a bottle from a cupboard behind him, mixed some rum-and-water. On another occasion, his sister objected to this operation, and he refrained. Presently after, he said, 'May I have a little drop now, only a *leetle* drop?' 'No, be a good boy.' At last he prevailed, and took his usual draught.

"On each visit I found he required to be drawn into

conversation. He would throw out a playful remark, and then pause awhile. He spoke by fits and starts, and had a slight impediment in his utterance, which made him grunt once or twice before he began a sentence; but his tones were loud and rich, and once, when he read to me a passage from a folio of Beaumont and Fletcher (which his sister had brought down to show me Coleridge's MS. remarks at the end of each play), the deep pathos of his voice gave great weight to the impression made by the poetry. He would jump up and slap his sister playfully on the back, and a roomy snuff-box often passed between them on the old round table. These little traits may serve to illustrate the character of Charles Lamb.

"I remember he agreed with me that Tom Moore's poetry was like very rich plum cake—very nice, but too much of it at a time makes one sick. He said that Byron had written only one good-natured thing, and that was the 'Vision of Judgment.' 'Mary,' he added to Miss Lamb, 'don't you *hate* Byron?' 'Yes, Charles,' she replied. 'That's right,' said he. Of [Conversation] Sharpe's 'Essays,' which had just been published and magnified in the *Quarterly*, he asserted—'They are commonplace, and of the two attempts at criticism in them worthy of notice, one—that on Cowper's "boundless contiguity of shade"—is completely incorrect.' He had a very high opinion of Wordsworth, saying, 'He is a very noble fellow.' I think he [Lamb] undervalued Coleridge's poetry. He esteemed the 'Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel' his best productions in verse. . . . He thought little of James Montgomery. He [M.] had only written one poem which pleased him, and that was among his minor pieces ["The Common Lot"], Taylor's *Philip Van Artevelde* had been sent to him as equal to Shakspeare. He thought it was nothing extraordinary. He had a good opinion of Tennyson's poems, which had lately been condemned in the *Quarterly*. He said that

to be a true poet a man must serve a long and rigorous apprenticeship. He must, like the mathematician, sit with a wet towel about his head, if he wished to excel. It was far easier to scribble verses than to hammer out good poetry, worthy of immortality. Of *metres*, he observed there were plenty of old ones, now little known, which were better than any new ones which could be devised, and would be quite as novel. He lost £25 by his best effort, 'John Woodvil.' He had, he said, a curious library of old poetry, etc., which he had bought at stalls, cheap. 'I have *nothing useful*,' he added: 'as for science, I know and care nothing about it.' . . . Mr. Lamb thought 'The Lay' the best of Scott's poetical works.

"He told me that he knew his letters before he could speak, and called on his sister to vouch for the truth of this story. He hated the country, and loved to walk on the London road, because then he could fancy that he was wending thither. He was a great walker. He never read what any of the reviews said about him. . . . He had written a poem called the 'Devil's Marriage'[1] to a tailor's daughter, but suppressed it on finding that Dr. ——, the Vicar of ——, had committed a like nuptial indiscretion. On rising to leave him, on my last visit, I could not open the parlour door! 'Ah,' he exclaimed, with a sweet smile, 'you can unlock the springs of Helicon, but you cannot open the door!'" So far Mr. Fuller Russell, whose experiments with the springs of Helicon, by the way, were not very auspicious, as a glance at my edition of Lamb's Letters, where the essayist's criticisms of the poet's effort "Emily de Wilton" are printed, will show.

The reminiscences which have just been quoted were printed, for a second time, in 1882, in *Notes and Queries*, where they produced some comment from Mr. Thomas Westwood. He wrote, in the same periodical: "The

[1] *Satan in Search of a Wife.* It was not, I think, suppressed.

Rev. J. Fuller Russell's graphic account of his interviews with Charles Lamb has recalled vividly to my memory the friend of my youth. My own last visit to him was also paid in that shady parlour of his Edmonton house, so near his last resting-place. A gloomy house it always seemed to me. Perhaps the shadow of what was to come brooded over it. Lamb's trick of jumping up and slapping his sister on the shoulder in moments of hilarity was a frequent and familiar outbreak. Mr. Fuller Russell, however, does not seem to have heard the triplet, half jocular, half grotesque, which Elia was wont to shout on such occasions :—

I had a sister—
The devil kist her,
And raised a blister !

It was his pretence to be proud of this triplet, as of a rhyming difficulty vanquished."

Mr. Westwood went on to remark that Lamb's admiration for Wordsworth's poetry was factitious, and he denied him any sense of natural beauty, but we need not, I think, adopt that view. The argument, however, leads to this pretty passage : " Amongst his visitors, indeed, were some of another strain. Miss Kelly, the actress, for instance, to whom I have alluded already in these columns. Miss Kelly, with the heart of a child, had all a child's delight in wild flowers. She had also a passion for little frogs. I was Miss Kelly's frog-catcher. When my scanty honours are counted, let not this one be overlooked. To have been Miss Kelly's frog-catcher and Bridget Elia's carpenter —that is something, surely ! "

Late in 1834 Lamb writes to a Mr. Childs of Bungay, in reply to a letter asking where he could procure *Elia*. Mr. Childs' own copy seems to have been lent to a friend in India, and Lamb says, " What a supreme felicity to the author (only he is no traveller) on the Ganges or Hydaspes (Indian streams) to meet a smutty Gentoo ready to burst with laughing at the tale of

Bo-Bo ![1] for doubtless it hath been translated into all the dialects of the East. I grieve the less, that Europe should want it." Years before Lamb had told Manning that he wished his name to be talked of in China. *Elia*, it seems, was already out of print. Lamb adds: "Shall I order a copy for you, and will you accept it? Shall I *lend* you, at the same time, my sole copy of the former volume (Oh! return it) for a month or two? In return, you shall favour me with the loan of one of those Norfolk-bred grunters that you laud so highly; I promise not to keep it above a day. What a funny name Bungay is! I never dreamt of a correspondent thence. I used to think of it as some Utopian town or borough in Gotham land. I now believe in its existence, as part of merry England! [*Some lines scratched out.*] The part I have scratched out is the best of the letter. Let me have your commands. CH. LAMB, *alias* ELIA."

Crabb Robinson writes on November 19th: "Bulwer wants to see Charles Lamb and will come to breakfast with me the first time L. comes." But I fancy this meeting was never accomplished. Bulwer some years later criticised Lamb with fine feeling and judgment. In a comparison between Elia and Walter Scott, between subjective and objective humour, he says, "All that he knows or observes in the world of books or men becomes absorbed in the single life of his own mind, and is reproduced as part and parcel of Charles Lamb. If thus he does not create imaginary characters, Caleb Balderstones and Major Dalgettys, he calls up, completes, and leaves to the admiration of all time a character which, as a personification of humour, is a higher being than even Scott has imagined, viz. that of Charles Lamb himself. Nor is there in the whole world of humorous creation an image more beautiful in its combinations of mirth and pathos. In the embodiment of humour, as it actually lived amongst us in

[1] "Dissertation on Roast Pig."

this man, there is a dignity equal to that with which Cervantes elevates our delight in his ideal creation. Quixote is not more essentially a gentleman than Lamb."

A short time only before Lamb's fatal illness, says Talfourd, "he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner at my house, where we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood. Among the four or five who met him on this occasion, the last on which I saw him in health, were his old friends Mr. Barron Field, Mr. Procter, and Mr. Forster, the author of the *Lives of Eminent English Statesmen*, a friend of comparatively recent date, but one with whom Lamb found himself as much at home as if he had known him for years."

One more letter and we reach the end. Lamb had borrowed Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* from Cary, and had left it at George Dyer's rooms in Clifford's Inn. On December 22nd he wrote to Mrs. Dyer asking her to despatch it to Edmonton.[1] It was his last

[1] In the life of H. F. Cary by his son we read: "He [Lamb] had borrowed of my father Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*, which was returned by Lamb's friend, Mr. Moxon, with the leaf folded down at the account of Sir Philip Sydney." Cary acknowledged the receipt of the book by the following poem:—

LINES TO THE MEMORY OF CHARLES LAMB

So should it be, my gentle friend;
Thy leaf last closed at Sydney's end.
Thou, too, like Sydney, wouldst have given
The water, thirsting and near heaven;
Nay were it wine, fill'd to the brim,
Thou hadst look'd hard, but given, like him.

letter. On the same morning, Monday, December 22nd, walking London-wards towards the Bell, he stumbled over a stone and fell, grazing his face. Talfourd tells the story: "On Friday evening Mr. Ryle, of the India House, who had been appointed co-executor with me of his will some years before, called on me, and informed me that Lamb was in danger. I went over to Edmonton on the following morning, and found him very weak, and nearly insensible to things passing around him. Now and then a few words were audible, from which it seemed that his mind, in its feebleness, was intent on kind and hospitable thought. His last correspondent, Mr. Childs, had sent a present of a turkey, instead of the suggested pig; and the broken sentences which could be heard, were of some meeting of friends to partake of it. I do not think he knew me; and having vainly tried to engage his attention, I quitted him, not believing his death so near at hand. In less than an hour afterwards, his voice gradually grew fainter, as he still murmured the names of Moxon, Procter, and some other old friends, and he sank into death as placidly as into sleep." So, on Saturday, December 27th, 1834, died Charles Lamb, in his sixtieth year.

Mary Lamb was at once visited by an attack of her malady that mercifully deprived her of any true sense of what was happening. She spoke of Lamb's

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And art thou mingled then among
Those famous sons of ancient song?
And do they gather round, and praise
Thy relish of their nobler lays?
Waxing in mirth to hear thee tell
With what strange mortals thou didst dwell!
At thy quaint sallies more delighted,
Than any's long among them lighted!

'Tis done: and thou hast join'd a crew,
To whom thy soul was justly due;
And yet I think, where'er thou be,
They'll scarcely love thee more than we.

death as if it were an ordinary matter of daily life. Crabb Robinson writes on January 1st, 1835: "I had a letter from Talfourd this morning. . . . Miss Lamb is quite insane, yet conscious of her brother's death, without feeling it, and able to point out the place for the grave." Robinson decided not to attend the funeral, at which were Talfourd and Ryle, the executors, friends from the India House, Moxon, Procter, Allsop and Cary. Ryle told Rickman that when Mary Lamb "saw her brother dead she observed on his 'beauty' when asleep and apprehended nothing further."

It was decided to ask Wordsworth for some lines to be cut upon Lamb's tombstone, and Moxon made the request in November, 1835, asking also for permission for Talfourd, who had been entrusted with Lamb's biography, to print the letters to the Wordsworths. Wordsworth replied in the following letter: "In a few days I hope to have an opportunity of sending such a selection of Lamb's letters, to myself and my family, as appear to me not unfit for immediate publication. There are, however, in them some parts which had better be kept back. . . . I have also thought proper to suppress every word of criticism upon my own poems. . . . The suppressed letters shall not be destroyed. Those relating to my works are withheld, partly because I shrink from the thought of assisting in any way to spread my own praises, and still more as being convinced that the opinions or judgments of friends given in this way are of little value." [1]

Wordsworth continues: "On the other page you have the requested epitaph. It was composed yesterday; and, by sending it immediately, I have prepared the way, I believe, for a speedy repentance, as I do

[1] By permission of Mr. Gordon Wordsworth the Lamb-Wordsworth correspondence in full is now printed in my edition of Lamb, the causes of objection to publication having long ceased to exist.

not know that I ever wrote so many lines without some retrenchment being afterwards necessary. If these verses should be wholly unsuitable for the end Miss L. had in view, I shall find no difficulty in reconciling myself to the thought of their not being made use of, though it would have given me great, very great, pleasure to fulfil her wishes in all points.

"The first objection that will strike you, and every one, is its extreme length, especially compared with epitaphs as they are now written; but this objection might in part be obviated by engraving the lines in double column, and not in capitals.

"Chiabrera has been my model—though I am aware that Italian churches,—both on account of their size, and the climate of Italy,—are more favourable to long inscriptions than ours. His epitaphs are characteristic and circumstantial. So have I endeavoured to make this of mine; but I have not ventured to touch upon the most striking feature of our departed friend's character, and the most affecting circumstance of his life, namely, his faithful and intense love of his sister. Had I been framing an Elegy or Monody this would and must have been done; but seeing and feeling the sanctity of that relation as it ought to be seen and felt, lights are required which could scarcely be furnished by an epitaph, unless it were to touch on little or nothing else. The omission, therefore, in my view of the case, was unavoidable, and I regret it the less,—you yourself having already treated the subject in verse with genuine tenderness and beauty.[1] . . .

"I cannot conclude without adding that the epitaph, if used at all, can only be placed in the church. It is much too long for an out-door stone, among our rains, damps, etc. . . ."

Wordsworth's poem, in its final state, I give below, first quoting a passage from the note which he prefixed to it in the edition of 1845: "Mary Lamb was ten

[1] See page 801.

years older than her brother, and has survived him as long a time. Were I to give way to my own feelings, I should dwell not only on her genius and intellectual powers, but upon the delicacy and refinement of manner which she maintained inviolable under most trying circumstances. She was loved and honoured by all her brother's friends ; and others, some of them strange characters, whom his philanthropic peculiarities induced him to countenance. The death of C. Lamb himself was doubtless hastened by his sorrow for that of Coleridge, to whom he had been attached from the time of their being schoolfellows at Christ's Hospital."

To a good Man of most dear memory
This Stone is sacred. Here he lies apart
From the great city where he first drew breath,
Was reared and taught ; and humbly earned his bread,
To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
Tease, and the thought of time so spent depress,
His spirit, but the recompense was high ;
Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful sire ;
Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air ;
And when the precious hours of leisure came,
Knowledge and wisdom, gained from converse sweet
With books, or while he ranged the crowded streets
With a keen eye, and overflowing heart :
So genius triumphed over seeming wrong,
And poured out truth in works by thoughtful love
Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears.
And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
Humour and wild instinctive wit, and all
The vivid flashes of his spoken words.
From the most gentle creature nursed in fields
Had been derived the name he bore—a name,
Wherever Christian altars have been raised,
Hallowed to meekness and to innocence ;
And if in him meekness at times gave way,
Provoked out of herself by troubles strange,
Many and strange, that hung about his life ;
Still, at the centre of his being, lodged

A soul by resignation sanctified:
And if too often, self-reproached, he felt
That innocence belongs not to our kind,
A power that never ceased to abide in him,
Charity, 'mid the multitude of sins
That she can cover, left not his exposed
To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
O, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived!

. . . . . .

From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart
Those simple lines flowed with an earnest wish,
Though but a doubting hope, that they might serve
Fitly to guard the precious dust of him
Whose virtues called them forth. That aim is missed;
For much that truth most urgently required
Had from a faltering pen been asked in vain:
Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed
As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love.

Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my Friend,
But more in show than truth; and from the fields,
And from the mountains, to thy rural grave
Transported, my soothed spirit hovers o'er
Its green untrodden turf, and blowing flowers;
And taking up a voice shall speak (tho' still
Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity
Which words less free presumed not even to touch)
Of that fraternal love, whose heaven-lit lamp
From infancy, through manhood, to the last
Of threescore years, and to thy latest hour,
Burnt on with ever-strengthening light, enshrined
Within thy bosom.

"Wonderful" hath been
The love established between man and man,
"Passing the love of women"; and between
Man and his help-mate is fast wedlock joined
Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise; and earth were now
A waste where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless. Our days glide on;
And let him grieve who cannot choose but grieve
That he hath been an Elm without his Vine,
And her bright dower of clustering charities,
That, round his trunk and branches, might have clung

Enriching and adorning. Unto thee,
Not so enriched, not so adorned, to thee
Was given (say rather, thou of later birth
Wert given to her) a Sister—'tis a word
Timidly uttered, for she *lives*, the meek,
The self-restraining, and the ever-kind;
In whom thy reason and intelligent heart
Found—for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanising, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld, or for her sake unsought—
More than sufficient recompence!

Her love
(What weakness prompts the voice to tell it here?)
Was as the love of mothers; and when years,
Lifting the boy to man's estate, had called
The long-protected to assume the part
Of a protector, the first filial tie
Was undissolved; and, in or out of sight,
Remained imperishably interwoven
With life itself. Thus, 'mid a shifting world,
Did they together testify of time
And season's difference—a double tree
With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
Such were they—such thro' life they *might* have been
In union, in partition only such;
Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High;
Yet, thro' all visitations and all trials,
Still they were faithful; like two vessels launched
From the same beach one ocean to explore
With mutual help, and sailing—to their league
True, as inexorable winds, or bars
Floating or fixed of polar ice, allow.

But turn we rather, let my spirit turn
With thine, O silent and invisible Friend!
To those dear intervals, nor rare nor brief,
When reunited, and by choice withdrawn
From miscellaneous converse, ye were taught
That the remembrance of foregone distress,
And the worse fear of future ill (which oft
Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
Upon its mother) may be both alike
Disarmed of power to unsettle present good
So prized, and things inward and outward held
In such an even balance, that the heart
Acknowledges God's grace, his mercy feels,
And in its depth of gratitude is still.

O gift divine of quiet sequestration!
The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness; but happier far
Was to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness. The sacred tie
Is broken; yet why grieve? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the blest world where parting is unknown.

Wordsworth's poem was not adopted for the purpose for which it had been asked. The lines which eventually were cut on the grave of Charles and Mary Lamb were from the pen of their friend H. F. Cary. But three of Wordsworth's lines have, however, been used. In Edmonton church is a memorial to William Cowper, Keats, and Charles Lamb, the inscription beneath the medallion of Lamb running: "In Memory of Charles Lamb, the gentle Elia, and author of the Tales from Shakespeare. Born in the Inner Temple 1775, educated at Christ's Hospital, died at Bay Cottage, Edmonton, 1834, and buried beside his sister Mary in the adjoining churchyard—

. . . At the centre of his being lodged
A soul by resignation sanctified . . .
O, he was good, if e'er a good Man lived."

Lamb's grave in 1897 was restored by "a member of the Christ's Hospital Club," but it fell again into decay. Some few years ago, however, it was maintained by the late Miss M. C. G. Jackson and another, and now that Miss Jackson is no more it has become the charge, as the tablet records, of "other hands." These hands are unlikely to relax their grip. The grave is increasingly an object of pilgrimage both by English and Americans.

CHAPTER LI

Mary Lamb's Last Days

1835-1847

TO THE SISTER OF ELIA

Comfort thee, O thou mourner, yet awhile!
Again shall Elia's smile
Refresh thy heart, where heart can ache no more.
What is it we deplore?

He leaves behind him, free from griefs and years,
Far worthier things than tears.
The love of friends without a single foe:
Unequall'd lot below!

His gentle soul, his genius, these are thine;
For these dost thou repine?
He may have left the lowly walks of men;
Left them he has; what then?

Are not his footsteps followed by the eyes
Of all the good and wise?
Though the warm day is over, yet they seek
Upon the lofty peak

Of his pure mind the roseate light that glows
O'er death's perennial snows.
Behold him! from the region of the blest
He speaks: he bids thee rest.

W. S. Landor.

"CONTRARY," says Talfourd, "to Lamb's expectation, who feared (as also his friends feared with him) the desolation of his own survivorship, which the difference of age rendered probable, Miss Lamb survived him for nearly eleven years." ("You must die first," Lamb had once said to her: and she had replied, "Yes, I must die first.") "When he died," Talfourd continues, "she was mercifully in a state of

partial estrangement, which, while it did not wholly obscure her mind, deadened her feelings, so that as she gradually regained her perfect senses she felt as gradually the full force of the blow, and was the better able calmly to bear it. For awhile she declined the importunities of her friends, that she would leave Edmonton for a residence nearer London, where they might more frequently visit her. *He* was there, asleep in the old churchyard, beneath the turf near which they had stood together, and had selected for a resting-place ; to this spot she used, when well, to stroll out mournfully in the evening, and to this spot she would contrive to lead any friend who came in the summer evenings to drink tea and went out with her afterwards for a walk." Mr. Cox, the author of the account of the Lambs at Edmonton from which I have already quoted, says that in 1875 he met some one who remembered Mary Lamb wandering out into the streets asking strangers querulously for her brother.

Immediately upon Lamb's death Crabb Robinson had written to Talfourd offering to help pecuniarily if Mary Lamb was in need of such assistance. Talfourd happily was able to reply thus : " For the exertion of the substantial kindness which you proffer I do not think there will be any room. Lamb has left all his property to Ryle and myself in trust for the benefit of his sister, to be applied, as we think proper—with power to her to dispose of any which may remain—and in default of that disposal to pay any residue after her death to Mrs. Moxon. As we have no doubt we shall obtain some pension for Miss Lamb from the India House Fund, and as Lamb has left £1,100 three per cents., worth now about £1,000, which (if necessary) would purchase an annuity of £120 at least for Miss Lamb's life, I do not think any pecuniary assistance can be requisite. Should it be, we will not fail to give you the opportunity of sharing in the pleasure of supplying it. I wrote to Wordsworth on Monday."

According to Procter, who drew up Lamb's will, the estate yielded £2,000. "The property of Charles Lamb," says Procter, "or so much as might be wanted for the purpose, was by his will directed to be applied towards the maintenance and comfort of his sister; and subject to that primary object, it was vested in trustees for the benefit of Miss Isola—Mrs. Moxon." Mary Lamb, as it happened, was in comfortable circumstances, the East India House Clerks' Fund having resolved, in March, 1835, to allow her £120 a year.

Robinson's *Diary* for January 12th, 1835, records a visit to Edmonton. Mary Lamb was not herself, and yet had gleams of herself. "'Oh, here's Crabby,' she said. 'Now this is very kind—not merely good-natured, but very, very kind—to come and see me in my affliction.' She spoke of Charles repeatedly. . . . She will live for ever in the memory of her friends as one of the most amiable and admirable of women." It was about this time that Landor sent to Robinson the verses which I have placed at the head of this chapter. "The death of Charles Lamb," he wrote, "has grieved me very bitterly. Never did I see a human being with whom I was more inclined to sympathise. There is something in the recollection that you took me with you to see him which affects me greatly more than writing or speaking of him could do with any other. When I first heard of the loss that all his friends, and many that were never his friends, sustained in him, no thought took possession of my mind except the anguish of his sister."

That very night, Landor continues, before he closed his eyes, he wrote (with his noble, generous impetuosity) the poem which I have quoted, and which he calls "this testimony of affection, this attempt at consolation to the finest genius that ever descended on the heart of woman." Landor held Mary Lamb's character and gifts in the highest esteem, some of which finds expression in a letter to the Countess of Blessington

on March 16th, 1835, which must have been written very soon after that which I have just quoted. "Mr. Robinson, the soundest man that ever stepped through the trammels of law, gave me, a few days ago, the sorrowful information, that another of our great writers had joined Coleridge. Poor Charles Lamb, what a tender, good, joyous heart had he! What playfulness! what purity of style and thought! His sister is yet living, much older than himself. One of her tales, with the sole exception of the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' is the most beautiful tale in prose composition in any language, ancient or modern.[1] A young girl has lost her mother, the father marries again, and marries a friend of his former wife. The child is ill reconciled to it, but being dressed in new clothes for the marriage, she runs up to her mother's chamber, filled with the idea how happy that dear mother would be at seeing her in all her glory—not reflecting, poor soul! that it was only by her mother's death that she appeared in it. How natural, how novel is all this! Did you ever imagine that a fresh source of the pathetic would burst forth before us in this trodden and hardened world? I never did, and when I found myself upon it, I pressed my temples with both hands, and tears ran down to my elbows."

"When Miss Lamb gets better," Talfourd wrote to Crabb Robinson, "so as to be able to express any wishes as to her own residence, it will be matter of consideration whether she shall remain where she is or not;—the people appear very attentive to her, but I should prefer her living with Miss James if that could be arranged hereafter." On March 17th, 1835, Talfourd wrote again, urging the importance of removing Mary Lamb from Edmonton to some new lodging with her nurse, Miss James. "It is impossible that in the place where she now is, she can be cheered by any society she can enjoy, except very rarely indeed;

[1] "The Father's Wedding Day" in *Mrs. Leicester's School.*

and it is now clear that we shall have sufficient for her maintenance with Miss James. . . . I cannot bear the thought of her remaining unsolaced and alone, as she must feel herself, now she is capable of feeling like herself, and besides difficulties in removing her may arise if she should relapse and the coarse-minded people she is with should influence her to fancy she would rather remain with them."

Later in the year Crabb Robinson has an entry in his *Diary* which bears upon Wordsworth's poem: "December 3rd, 1835:—Went in the evening to Moxon's. With him was Miss Lamb. She was very comfortable—not in high spirits—but calm, and she seemed to enjoy the sight of so many old friends. There were Cary, Allsop, and Miss James. No direct talk about her brother. Wordsworth's epitaph she disapproves. She does not like any allusion to his being a clerk, or to family misfortunes. This is very natural. Not even dear Mary can overcome the common feeling that would conceal lowness of station, or a reference to ignoble sufferings. On the other hand, Wordsworth says, 'Lamb's submitting to that mechanical employment placed him in fine moral contrast with other men of genius—his contemporaries—who, in sacrificing personal independence, have made a wreck of morality and honour, to a degree which it is painful to consider. To me, this was a noble feature in Lamb's life, and furnishes an admirable lesson, by which thousands might profit."

We know, also from Robinson's *Diary*, that Talfourd's wishes with respect to Miss Lamb's removal were not realised for some years; for he mentions visiting her at Edmonton in August, 1837, when she was in good health and took him to her brother's grave; and again in August, 1839, when he found that she had been ill for ten months, but was well enough, although "inert" of mind, to play a few games of picquet and to talk "good sense."

I have seen a letter from Procter to Talfourd dated June 22nd, 1841, when Mary Lamb was in her seventy-seventh year, which indicates why the move was at last happily made. Procter, it seems, visited Mary Lamb unexpectedly at Edmonton on June 21st, and found things not at all as they should be. Mrs. Walden had developed a very evil temper, and her patient was obviously neglected and in danger of being unduly and unnecessarily excited. Procter writes: "The woman of the house was *out*, and did not return while I remained, which was upwards of an hour. I took Miss L. a drive out (a mile or so) and she seemed very glad to have a little fresh air. She tells me that whilst the children were young, she was desirous of staying, to mediate between them and the mother (whose temper she says amounts to a disease) and partly (as far as I could collect) because she thought it might be serviceable to the people themselves. Miss Lamb was, yesterday, perfectly well. . . . In my opinion, her mere desire to leave the place—repeatedly and strongly expressed—is a sufficient reason for her leaving it. No one could talk more sensibly or better in any respect than she did yesterday. She enquired after all her friends and acquaintance—and I think if she were nearer to London, the friends of her brother and herself would have *many* opportunities of rendering the last days of her life more happy than they are at present."

The result of this letter was that, in 1841, Mary Lamb was moved to the house of Miss James's married sister, Mrs. Parsons—herself a nurse—at 41 Alpha Road, St. John's Wood, with Miss James near at hand; and there, for the most part in the shadow, but occasionally her old self, she spent the remaining few years of her life.

Of Miss James and her sister, who were the daughters of the rector of Beguildy, in Shropshire, we should know practically nothing were it not for the reminis-

cences of their great-nephew the late John Hollingshead, in his interesting book, *My Lifetime*. Mr. Hollingshead, who was born in 1827, could just remember seeing Lamb—a "mannikin" is his phrase for him. He tells us that Miss James, at some time, I imagine, in the late twenties or early thirties, "tried her luck at lodging letting, at the corner of the Grove Road. As her 'connection,' through the Lambs, was chiefly of a literary character, her fortunes varied with the success or failure of various magazines, but I never heard that she experienced any serious trouble, except in the case of Dr. Maginn, and that she may have slightly exaggerated.

"Another aunt, Mrs. Parsons, who lived at No. 20, Alpha Road, a little lower down, had undertaken the charge of poor Mary Lamb, and had fitted her up a comfortable library sitting-room on the ground floor, with a French window opening into a garden. The garden was almost an orchard—part of the great orchard which probably gave its name to Orchard Street—and this was full of trees that produced the finest apples—now all but extinct—known as 'Ribstone Pippins.' In my wanderings, especially in the autumn, I found my way to this orchard, which was only one of many in the same road, and after giving a defiant challenge to English cholera, I spent the rest of the afternoon with the dreamy old lady, who looked over me rather than at me, and seemed to see many visions that were beyond my limited intelligence. Sometimes we played at cards—her favourite pastime—such games as I had any knowledge of, and sometimes when she was tired or liked to roam about the garden, I was allowed to browse upon the books which walled in the apartment. Most of them were authors' copies—simply bound in rough paper or boards, with ragged-edged leaves and ample margins. They were fifty years in advance of the modern artistic publisher. Many of the folios were there that had been bought

by Charles Lamb in his roamings, and brought home and carefully collated with his sister, by the aid of a tallow candle. The old dramatists were, of course, well represented, and the *picaresco* school of fiction, notably *The Rogue; or, the Adventures of Don Guzman D'Alfarache*.[1] . . .

"Visitors sometimes came in, and I was allowed to watch them from a corner. William Godwin I thought rather prosy in his talk,[2] and Tom Hood did not give me the impression which his works afterwards created in my mind. Little Miss Kelly, the actress and artistic mother of Mrs. Keeley, had none of the modern stage-tinsel about her; and Crabb Robinson had a trustee air, which he probably acquired by living in the Temple. These are only the hazy impressions of a poor, ignorant boy, who had to use his eyes and ears, with little more than instinct to guide him. In the cool of the evening, when the bats were flying about, I was allowed a pinch of snuff out of the historic silver box, marked 'M. L.' . . . That snuff-box eventually came into my possession, and I gave it to the Duke of Fife, as a present on his marriage."

One letter and one acrostic by Charles Lamb are the only documents which Miss James preserved, destroying the remainder, says Mr. Hollingshead, on a "mistaken question of principle." Lamb was unfortunate in the principles of too many of his correspondents: Mrs. Procter also destroyed a bundle of his letters, Grosvenor Lloyd burned all Charles Lloyd's papers, and not a line to Martin Burney seems to have survived.

We have little information concerning Mary Lamb's

[1] Many of Mary Lamb's books, with Mrs. Parsons' name in them and a few enriched with marginalia of Lamb, were sold at Hodgson's in December, 1906, her copy of *The Rogue* among them.

[2] Mr. Hollingshead was astray here. Godwin died in 1836, while Miss Lamb was still at Edmonton. If he had visited Alpha Road, it must have been to see another of Miss James's lodgers.

later days. In a letter to Jane Norris (afterwards Jane Tween), belonging probably to Christmas, 1841, Mary Lamb writes : " I long to shew you what a nice snug place I have got into—in the midst of a pleasant little garden. I have a room for myself and my old books on the ground floor, and a little bedroom up two pairs of stairs. When you come to town, if you have not time to go [to] the Moxons, an omnibus from the Bell and Crown in Holborn would [bring] you to our door in [a] quarter of an hour. If your dear Mother does not venture so far, I will contrive to pop down to see [her]. Love and all seasonable wishes to your sister and Mary, &c. I am in the midst of many friends —Mr. & Mrs. Kenney, Mr. & Mrs. Hood, Bar[r]on Field & his brother Frank, & their wives &c., all within a short walk."

Carew Hazlitt relates that it was Miss Lamb's custom, when visiting her friends in St. John's Wood, to carry three or four empty snuff-boxes with her, which they were careful should be filled ere her departure. She also often would secrete in a large handkerchief whatever article particularly pleased her, and bear it home. Another glimpse of her we also have in a little paper of reminiscences written for me by the late Mrs. Edward FitzGerald. When visiting the Lambs at Colebrook Cottage Mrs. FitzGerald (then Lucy Barton), as I have related in an earlier chapter, had noticed particularly the bookcase, which was filled with ragged books to which the dealers' labels were still sticking with their inconsiderable prices marked on them. " I believe," she wrote in 1893, " that once again I saw that bookcase. I was taken by some friends to call on Miss Lamb after her brother's death. When I was introduced to her, a chair was placed for me close to her own. She took my hand, looked intently at me (my dress happened to be of blue muslin), and stroked down my skirts once or twice, saying, with a look of surprise and perhaps of

slight reproach, '*Bernard Barton's daughter!*' But I think she soon forgave my un-Quakerly appearance, for she presently took my arm, and led me up to a bookcase, before which we paced up and down, now and then stopping to look at it, and even to touch it. Surely at that moment we both remembered Colebrook Row!"

Crabb Robinson records a visit to Mary Lamb in August, 1842, when he found her fully in possession of her faculties, and walked with her to Hood's; but in March, 1843, he describes her as a wreck of herself. She was however well enough in July of that year to instruct Miss James to write a letter expressing her sorrow at the death of Mrs. Randal Norris. Another old friend, Thomas Hood, died in 1845.

Mary Lamb lived to be eighty-two. She died on May 20th, 1847. Crabb Robinson thus describes the funeral, in a letter to his brother Thomas on May 29th: "Yesterday was a painfully interesting day. I attended the funeral of Mary Lamb. At nine a coach fetched me. We drove to her dwelling, at St. John's Wood, from whence two coaches accompanied the body to Edmonton, across a pretty country; but the heat of the day rendered the drive oppressive. We took refreshment at the house where dear Charles Lamb died, and were then driven to our homes." The mourners were Talfourd, Ryle, Moxon, Crabb Robinson, John Forster, Allsop, Mockshay, an uninvited guest, and Martin Burney who, to Robinson's annoyance, "shed tears." "There was no sadness" (with this unfortunate exception): "we all talked with warm affection of dear Mary Lamb, and that most delightful of creatures, her brother Charles,—of all the men o genius I ever knew, the one the most intensely and universally to be loved."

The Index which follows is based upon that made for the First Edition as a labour of love by the late Miss M. C. G. Jackson.

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